

ACS TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY FELLOWSHIP

PROJECT REPORT

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“*Yavanika*: Integrating Asian Theatre into Theatre Studies Through Streaming Video”

<http://www.yavanika.org/video>

The *Yavanika* project was conceived to facilitate expanded study of Asian theatre forms in theatre and performance studies. The problem of access to theatrical performances affects the way Western theatre is studied, and affects to an even greater degree the diversification of theatre curricula. Inaccessibility greatly limits the extent to which theatre courses can include the study of theatre traditions in Japan, China, India, Indonesia, Korea, and elsewhere, which carry significant literary, musical, and religious heritages.

While in some ways video is an inadequate substitute for student travel to the several countries where such traditions continue, video may yet be the best alternative, providing as it does a degree of visual and aural representation of which both lectures and textbooks are incapable. But traditionally-distributed video has its own difficulties. Commercial video recordings commonly concentrate on a few, “mainstream” forms, such as Japan’s *kabuki* and China’s *xiqu*, leaving other forms of great cultural value—India’s *ramlila* and Indonesia’s *wayang*, for example—on the margins of study. Furthermore, commercial video packages having to do with Asian theatre are often prohibitively expensive.

The *Yavanika* project aims to make it possible for students in relevant courses of study (Theatre, History, Area and International Studies, Religious Studies, Music, etc.) to see and hear the subjects of their studies.

With funding from ACS and Rhodes College, the *Yavanika* project consists of an online database of Asian theatre video material. Organized according to geographic region, these clips are accessible as “streams”, which means that instead of downloading a video file from the library, a user turns on a broadcast of a file, which begins immediately on the user’s machine, loading into a viewer and playing at the same time the file is moving over the

Internet. Consequently, the very large video files in the library move relatively easily and wait-free from the *Yavanika* server to users.

Streaming video also addresses some copyright issues, since streaming does not leave a new copy of a video file on a user's own machine, but "plays through", rather like radio. With other copyright issues in mind, the *Yavanika* project does not intend to be a source of commercial video material (except where explicit permission is obtained). Instead, the bulk of the project's material is intended to come from the field work of scholars working in the area of Asian performance.

The software architecture of the project consists of server software, a database, a PHP-based Web interface, and streaming server software. Apache HTTP Server serves as the basic Web server. MySQL runs the project's database. A modified version of Coppermine Photo Gallery provides the Web interface. The streaming software is Apple's Quicktime Streaming Server (QTSS). The project's reliance on QTSS has some advantages and some disadvantages. Unlike other streaming servers, QTSS is open-source software, which can be installed and operated free. QTSS does, however, require that Apple's free Quicktime Player be installed and configured to play the RTSP protocol on each user's machine. Although this is the out-of-the-box configuration of Macintosh computers, many machines relying on other operating systems are not so configured by default.

The project's hardware consists of two computers and some miscellaneous components. The HTTP server, the database, and all components of the Web interface reside on a Mac mini. The streaming server runs on a Mac G5. Towards editing and processing digital video files, the project also has a 400GB external hard drive, as well as equipment for capturing both digital and analog video sources.

As of this writing, the *Yavanika* project includes material having to do with performance forms in India, Korea, China, the Philippines, and the United States, and it anticipates that its library will expand significantly over the 2005/06 academic year as new sources of material are identified. Colleagues are invited to submit material to the library by emailing David Mason at masond@rhodes.edu.

A public demonstration of the project is scheduled in October, 2005, in the Barrett Library at Rhodes College.