


MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. William Miller
Dean of Libraries

FROM: Susan Love Brown, Professor
Department of Anthropology 

DATE: January 15, 2014

RE: Acquisition of Academic Video Online (AVON)

I write this memorandum to support your acquisition of Academic Video Online (AVON) through Alexander Street Press (ASP). This acquisition will greatly enhance the availability of films appropriate for the courses in anthropology that I and my colleagues teach, and having sampled several of the collections available under the AVON umbrella, I can say that even those in addition to the Ethnographic Video Online and Filmmakers Library Online (which I use extensively) will be appropriate for my courses, such as Psychological Anthropology, Cultural Anthropology, Gender and Culture, and Anthropology of Religion. Looking at the bonus clusters, I can say that I would make extensive use of Area Studies Video Online, Ethnic Studies Video Online, Psychology Video Online, and Women's and Gender Studies Video Online – all of which correspond to courses taught in my department and many others throughout the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters.

The library has always made films and videos available, and in recent years the collection has grown. But what is essential about the streaming video collections is their use in online courses. Online teaching has expanded greatly at FAU over the last few years, and streaming videos are a crucial part of the pedagogical toolkit in these courses. When I started teaching online anthropology courses about four years ago, I was perplexed as to how I was going to continue to employ ethnographic films. Fortunately, the FAU library secured a couple of collections that contained some of the classic anthropology films. Online students have easy access to these films, which can be linked through Blackboard, thus making online learning as rich an experience as that of the regular classroom.

Speaking of the regular classroom, with the almost complete conversion of FAU classrooms to “smart” classrooms, the availability of these streaming videos directly from the classroom desktops for face-to-face classes is a timesaver. These films do not have to be checked out and returned, and the faculty member has to master only one technical apparatus rather than several. It also means that students can access the films a lot more easily to review them for exams.

In short, the expansion of the library's streaming video collection is a necessity, given the direction in which the technical side of teaching is going. And the 26 video collections listed in your proposal cut across virtually every discipline in the College of Arts & Letters. Securing this collection can only improve the level of teaching and scholarship at FAU.