

Software lets users make movies online

Museums, libraries and educators among potential users of Vancouver company's Web-based movie authoring tool

Peter Wilson

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A new Vancouver-made online movie creation tool, MovieStudio, will not only help students learn while making their own small films, it will also keep precious copyright content from being pirated.

And its creators are hoping it will be a money-maker for them.

With MovieStudio, all the content needed to make small movies -- including video clips, photos, music and sound effects -- stays on the servers, as does the final film itself, said Jim Monro. His company, Monro Communications, developed the application over the past three years.



CREDIT: Glenn Baglo, Vancouver Sun

Jim Monro says his company's software allows historical content to be accessed and used in a way that maintains protection of its copyright.

"This simplifies digital rights management for owners of online content and for users of that content, because it always stays on the servers and you can use it without infringement," Monro said Wednesday

"The premise now for it as a marketable software product stems from the recent rapidly growing trend to digitize and put video online. It sometimes seems as if all the film on the planet is being digitized."

Monro said the target for licensing the software would be museums, broadcasters, educational distributors, libraries and archives.

Users could then look at these precious collections of historical footage and photos and make their own movies online, without ever letting the content seep out into other people's hands.

MovieStudio follows a timeline method of movie creation in which elements like clips, sound effects, photos and narration (all stored on the server) are dropped into place.

It's an interface that would be familiar to users of such programs as Apple's iMovie.

Once the small film has been completed, users are able to send an e-mail message to friends, family and teachers containing an Internet address that allows the movie to be viewed in a browser online.

That way viewers don't have to expend time, effort and bandwidth to download it.

MovieStudio -- which even allows users to type in their own narration and have it read aloud in the background of the films -- is already getting praise from educators for its initial achievements.

Recently, the B.C. Social Studies Teachers Association presented Monro with the Innovator of the Year Award 2006 for the history website First Contact: Champlain and the First Nations, which allows users to research the topic and then build their own movies from the resources on the site (firstcontact.monroco.com).

As well, MovieStudio won the Intermedia Globe Gold award for 2005 in Hamburg, Germany.

Monro Communications uses the First Contact website, which requires Shockwave and Quicktime, to show how MovieStudio can be used.

"Within First Contact you have a clip gallery, you have two timelines, you've got a link page with something like 75 links going to just about everything you ever wanted to know about Champlain and his explorations from a first nations perspectives and we're distributing that as a licensed product for schools," said Monro.

The look and feel of the interface can be changed, depending on where MovieStudio is used.

Monro said the system can also be used a tool for children in remote communities to cross the digital divide by telling and sharing their own stories and local history and reclaiming their language.

networks@png.canwest.com

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