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Submitted by Steve Hanson on January 6, 2017 - 12:28pm

Hi -

I'm starting some preliminary work on developing a Roku channel to be associated with this site. Basically the idea is that we will build a Roku channel called The Wisconsin Channel. The basic concept is to build the ability to use this platform to feed a Roku channel which can be watched on any Roku-compatible device - Roku boxes, smart TV's, etc. and also to allow watching the video on this web site. This is in principle fairly straightforward.

Currently my thought is to make a content type on this site for Roku content which will -- one way or another - be put in as part of the site - the main difference between the current video content on the site and the new content type will be that rather than just embedding video from YouTube or Vimeo, this will be a place to actually upload video content. We will need to host the content somewhere, primarily as MP4 files, in order to repurpose the content through Roku.

Conceptually this just amounts to hosting the content and building an appropriate xml document on the site that Roku can read, and use to build the channel and display it on Roku devices. This is fairly simple with some of the new tools that Roku provides.

I am at the moment working through Roku's tutorial for this and have built a small demo channel for testing purposes.

Next step will be to build a video content type in Drupal for this purpose, integrate it into Organic Groups so that it can be added in to different communities on the site, and then to

build an outgoing feed. I have a LOT of questions about some of the backend issues -- how will we organize sections in the Roku channel, and where will we actually store this content being the two main questions. Storage has a number of possibilities:

a. Store it directly on Wis.community and count on the integration of the site into Cloudflare to cache the huge video streams out on the edge in the internet -- I'm a little leary of this as it is a little frightening since my bandwidth costs here are a little bit scary. It's not completely clear to me how well Cloudflare will do with caching files of this size.

b. Use external storage - this would probably be keeping the files in S3 storage with Amazon, and setting this up so that uploads and downloads occur directly to the cloud. This is doable and may in the long run end up costing less than hosting the video on my servers in Eau Claire.

c. Using a hosting service - the likely candidate there would be to use Vimeo Pro, which allows the owner to do direct downloads of the video -- though I note a few people having issues with that in the Roku forums - it's never really clear whether these complaints are real or just misunderstandings.

My inclination here is to think that I will use the local storage in Wis.community for testing, and will count on Cloudflare to not completely muck up my service to other clients. I would actually like to know how that will work out. I will probably need to institute some new rules on Cloudflare for this.

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