



# University of Edinburgh Case Study



## Summary

The University of Edinburgh uses Real® streaming media software to create and deliver live and on-demand content for both classroom augmentation and public relations. The cost-effectiveness, ease of use and reliability of Real technology enables solutions that benefit University administrators, students and staff, and the broader community.

## Introduction

Founded in 1583, the University of Edinburgh in Edinburgh, Scotland, has faculties in divinity, law, medicine, art, science, music, social science and veterinary medicine. With a student population of 20,000, the University is one of Scotland's largest institutions of higher education. A £750 million per year business with a staff of 6,000, the University is also one of the largest employers in the country.

*"Real products have helped the University provide services to students and staff that weren't possible before, from students viewing lectures online to maximising participation by streaming large-scale events."*

**John Smith**  
Technical Author,  
Computing Services Department  
University of Edinburgh

## The Need

The University maintains a strong Computing Services Department that provides streaming media services — including encoding, broadcasting, and live and on-demand hosting — to students and staff. Acting as its own profit centre, Computing Services also consults for clients inside and outside the University and helps them understand the associated costs of streaming media as well as its hardware, software and networking requirements.

In 1996, the University began using Real streaming media solutions as part of a technology demonstration that studied the feasibility of distributing via the Internet thousands of audio extracts from audio tapes collected by the School of Scottish Studies. The project started out relatively small and self-contained. However, as exposure to this and other streaming media projects increased, the technology gained support and interest across the University.

As a direct result of that initial streaming media project, the University of Edinburgh — in conjunction with BBC Scotland, the Scottish National Trust and the University of the Highlands and Islands — is now the technical lead for a larger project that will digitise format the entire collection of 12,000 audio tapes.

As the demand for streaming opportunities increased across campus, the University's Computing Services Department needed a streaming media technology that would make a variety of materials available live and on demand to a diverse audience both on and off campus. The technology would have to be scalable, reliable, cost-effective and easy to use.

## The Solution

According to the University, a principal benefit of Real technology is its ease of use. The University's academic and related staff find Real content creation software much easier to use than other available tools. They make extensive use of Real products for streaming

solutions despite the availability of Microsoft Media Services (which comes bundled with Windows 2000 Server software).

Today, students and staff at the University of Edinburgh take advantage of Real streaming media technology in a variety of ways:

- Live and on-demand classroom presentations and lectures keep students up-to-speed.
- Project demonstrations and exhibitions expand the appeal and visibility of various departments.
- Public relations and marketing materials available via the University's main website help recruit students and others.

The University uses Real content creation, encoding and server software running on a RedHat Linux operating system and Dell PowerEdge server hardware. RealPlayers are installed on all PCs in public areas and will be incorporated in the application mix for the managed staff desktop now under development.

The University is in the process of upgrading to Helix™ Universal Server, the new universal digital media server from Real. This will allow the University to stream RealAudio®, RealVideo®, Windows Media® and QuickTime® formats from a single platform. By deploying a single system to stream all formats, the University will reduce infrastructure, delivery and administration costs, eliminate redundant hardware, and simplify the overall streaming process.

## Mission Accomplished

Real streaming media technology has proliferated throughout the University. The expanded Computing Services Department now acts essentially as an ASP for hosting content campus-wide, and provides streaming solutions and services for other universities.

Recent successes include the live webcast of a lecture given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown. The lecture occurred in a room with limited seating. To allow as many students as possible to attend, Computing Services set up a streamed RealVideo broadcast in another lecture hall across campus, which quickly filled to capacity.

The University also has a restricted FM license to broadcast a student radio station. For access via the Internet, Computing Services picks up the signal, encodes the content and streams it in RealAudio format.

Future projects involving Real streaming media technology include:

- Record audio and video files of a collection of rare musical instruments. The files will be streamed online, which will allow a wider audience to see and hear these valuable and usually inaccessible instruments.
- Digitise the Humanities and Language School's large archive of foreign language films and make them available on demand to a wider student audience.

*"With Real technology, the Computing Services Department is better equipped to provide services that allow the University to keep up with the increasing demand for high-technology solutions."*

**John Smith**

*Technical Author,  
Computing Services Department  
University of Edinburgh*

The logo for Helix Universal Server features the word "Helix" in a bold, sans-serif font, with a stylized yellow and green helix symbol to its right. Below "Helix" is the text "UNIVERSAL SERVER" in a smaller, all-caps, sans-serif font.

*"Our staff likes to use Real solutions as much as possible. They believe they are quality, table solutions that deliver."*

**John Smith**

*Technical Author,  
Computing Services Department  
University of Edinburgh*

- Provide on-demand learning materials and content to the Human Resources Department, specifically in areas in which it is difficult or not cost-effective for the Department to scale.
- Promote a tighter integration of services, including asset management, content creation, content access and more.
- Deliver the full range of streaming media possibilities to students — not just access to content, but content creation as well. This will allow students to use streaming media to complete coursework such as dissertations.

With Real technology, the University of Edinburgh is at the forefront of the streaming media revolution. Real products are reliable, cost-effective, easy to use and allow a diverse range of students, staff and others to access live and on-demand streaming media content anywhere, anytime.

## About Real

Real is the global leader in Internet media delivery. It develops and markets software products and services designed to enable users of personal computers and other consumer electronic devices to send and receive audio, video and other multimedia services using the Web.

## Contact Real Today

Discover how Real streaming media solutions will help your educational institution expand its communication opportunities. Visit us at [www.realnetworks.com](http://www.realnetworks.com) or contact a sales representative at **1-800-444-8011**.

