

Videonet Vibrations!

A Quarterly Newsletter of Project Videonet, the California Public
Library Videoconferencing Network

Issue 2
April 2003

In this issue:

[All About IP](#)

[Don't Overlook These Discounts!](#)

[Project Videonet Report Card](#)

[Sign Up for Skills Training](#)

[Spanish-Language Videoconferencing in
Imperial County](#)

[Fun with Videoconferencing](#)

Archives:

Issue 1

[HTML](#) - [PDF](#)

To IP or Not to IP: That is the Question



Some of you may have heard the buzz about the potential for videoconferencing over IP (Internet protocol) networks, as opposed to over ISDN lines. The buzz is justified. IP is the next frontier for this ever-evolving technology.

Videoconferencing over IP involves transmitting videoconferencing signals over the same type of network you send data over, be it within your building (over a Local Area Network or LAN), within a multi-building enterprise (a Wide Area Network, or WAN), or

among different organizations using the publicly accessible Internet.

So what's the big deal about IP videoconferencing? Cost. In most cases, pricing is not usage-sensitive like it is with ISDN videoconferencing. You pay a flat fee for the connection, and can use it 24/7 or once a month--the charge is the same.

Here's the good news -- video-over-IP works really well over LANs and WANs. This is great for California's universities and community colleges, which are all interconnected on one huge, private data network, and are increasingly abandoning ISDN videoconferencing for IP. An initiative called the Digital California Project is underway to extend this network to K-12 schools and, potentially, to public libraries.

This ultra-broadband network is called several names in California, but the world knows it as Internet2. (See <http://www.i2icom.com/internet2.html> for more information on Internet2 and public libraries.)

Internet2-based videoconferencing is far more reliable than ISDN videoconferencing, and offers a degree of centralized control, management, and quality assurance that doesn't exist in the ISDN world.

However, video-over-IP doesn't work very well over the regular Internet, which doesn't have the Quality-of-Service guarantees (i.e., dedicated bandwidth) necessary to ensure good video and audio for interactive videoconferencing. This is bad news for California public libraries, which are interconnected primarily via the regular Internet.

Nevertheless, telecommunications vendors such as WireOne have begun selling a video-over-IP solution for customers who are not on any other kind of proprietary data network or WAN. WireOne will install a data line exclusively for videoconferencing - then connect the data line to its own nationwide IP network that is dedicated to videoconferencing.

To date, customers have typically paid a flat (and hefty) fee for unlimited usage over these dedicated videoconferencing IP networks. This might be fine for folks who do a lot of videoconferencing, but the price has been too steep for occasional users like public libraries. However, WireOne has recently introduced a pay-per-use pricing plan. Even though the price is a bit more than ISDN, the WireOne approach may be worth it if it reduces or eliminates the quality and reliability issues often associated with ISDN.

About 2/3 of videoconferencing-equipped public libraries in California are rural, with small technical staffs and not much time to devote to troubleshooting. The California State Library's Rural Initiative will be enlisting three or four of these public libraries later this year to test this new approach to videoconferencing-over-IP. We're hoping this proves to be the Holy Grail of videoconferencing - plug-and-play.

By the way, all video-over-IP vendors have gateways and bridges in their networks that allow their customers to connect to the ISDN world. So, IP or no IP, we can continue to be part of one big happy family of public library videoconferencing users.

Don't Forget Your Discounts!

Vibrations! subscriber Ira Bray (California State Library) liked the advice on low-cost long distance service in the last issue, but wanted to make sure readers realized some of the OTHER great ways to save money on videoconferencing. So here's a handy-dandy matrix for public libraries using ISDN videoconferencing.

Videoconferencing Cost Element	Special Discounted Rates	California Teleconnect Fund	E-rate
Equipment Purchase	Available through CalNet	No discounts	Only certain equipment components eligible, and only for public libraries in the 80 - 90% discount range
ISDN line installation	Available through CalNet	No discounts	Under certain circumstances
ISDN monthly recurring costs	Available through CalNet	50% discount	Under certain circumstances
ISDN usage charges	Available through CalNet and Sprint (see last issue)	No discount	Under certain circumstances

Icing on the cake: Public Libraries can combine the E-rate and CTF discounts on monthly recurring charges. If pursuing both, the e-rate discount would come first, with the CTF discount applied on top of that. But the CTF discount is easier to get, so most folks pursue that first, then recalculate it once (and if) they obtain the E-rate discount.

Useful URLs:

- CalNet Contract: <https://ebiznet.sbc.com/calnetinfo/>
- California Teleconnect Fund & E-Rate: <http://www.library.ca.gov/html/libserh8.cfm#Resources>

Project Videonet Report Card: Mom Would be Proud

Here's a progress report on the various Project Videonet workplan elements:

- Established listserv for public libraries equipped with interactive videoconferencing. We have more than 150 subscribers, many from out-of-state. To subscribe: <http://lists.dreamhost.com/listinfo.cgi/videonet-infopeople.dreamhost.com>
- Distributed survey on videoconferencing funding, usage and policies to 40 California public libraries and 134 out-of-state public libraries or multi-type library systems. Results will be gathered and analyzed next quarter.
- Published product and pricing guidelines for public libraries wishing to pursue videoconferencing as part of their Prop 14 applications. [Check it out here.](#)
- Published two issues of *Videonet Vibrations!*
- Announced availability of videoconferencing skills training for public libraries; see next article for details.

Who Else Has It?

[Click here](#) to see the list of out-of-state public libraries and library systems we compiled to receive the Videonet survey. This is by no means definitive -- just what we were able to cobble together through Google, listserv postings, and personal contacts in the videoconferencing underworld.

Trivia Question: Which state has the most public libraries equipped with interactive videoconferencing? Answer: Iowa, with 53 sites. California is second, with 40. (Answer based on research findings to date).

Getting Comfortable with Videoconferencing

In case you missed the listserv announcement, it's not too late to grab a seat in Project Videonet's two-hour workshop on "Videoconferencing Fundamentals for Public Libraries".

The class will cover:

- Equipment Nuts & Bolts
- Public Library Videoconferencing Applications
- Making or Receiving a Video Call
- Basic Troubleshooting
- Running a Meeting via Videoconferencing
- Coaching Presenters and Participants
- Care & Feeding of Your Equipment

Not surprisingly, the class will be taught via videoconferencing. If your video unit is on life support, we'll find you another videoconferencing site nearby.

If you've ever been (1) afraid to touch your videoconferencing equipment, (2) tempted to shove it in a closet and brick up the door, and/or (3) embarrassed to talk about it in civilized company, this training is for YOU! A more conventional definition of the intended audience would be:

- Staff with hands-on responsibility for videoconferencing equipment at your library.
- Staff who arrange for, facilitate, or attend videoconferences at your library

Even if your public library has been involved with videoconferencing for some time, you or your staff could probably benefit from a "skills refresher" or a chance to orient new employees. And if you have outside groups or other city/county departments that use your equipment, invite them too!

"Videoconferencing Fundamentals" will be taught by long-time (but perpetually youthful) video guru Vivian Goldschmidt, who has an extensive background in educational technology. Vivian will provide you with great hand-outs and cheat sheets, and also lead you in a number of hands-on exercises using your own equipment.

Since we don't want anything to come between you and your video unit, there's no tuition for California public libraries. We'll just expect you to pick up your own ISDN usage charges to connect to the conference. And we'll even consider waiving these in hardship cases.

To sign up, contact Project Videonet Manager Dan Theobald at 415-431-0329 or via email at dtheobald@i2icom.com. Vivian will follow-up with you to discuss dates and times. We plan to offer the workshop several times between now and September 30 (with several libraries in each session), and should be able to accommodate everyone's needs and schedules among those sessions.

Note to Non-Golden Staters: Unfortunately, the terms of our grant funding precludes inclusion of out-of-state libraries in this workshop. (We'll share a copy of our LSTA application, though, if you want to replicate something similar in your own state!)

A Videonet Family Portrait: Enticing Spanish Speakers in Imperial County

"What's a public library?" Now, who would ask a question like *that*?

How about the large percentage of Imperial County's Hispanic population who are recent immigrants from Mexico.

"The public library is not a staple of everyday life in Mexico," says Sandra Tauler, director of the Camarena Memorial Library in Calexico. "Public libraries have traditionally been used only by university students. In our community, we have a lot of Spanish-speaking residents who think we are a bookstore and charge for books and services."

So how do you market public library services to folks who have little or no knowledge about what a public library is or does?

Faced with that stumper, Tauler and colleagues Marjo Mello (Brawley Public Library) and Connie Barrington (Imperial County Library) dreamed up Proyecto Televista. The project, funded by an LSTA grant, uses interactive videoconferencing to provide residents with live, interactive Spanish-language programs featuring nationally prominent Hispanic role models and subject matter experts.



"By featuring prominent persons, particularly figures that people know from TV or radio, we hope to attract new users to the libraries and educate them about all the Spanish-language services we have to offer," says Tauler. "Once we've got them in the door, they're a captive audience for our message, at least till the videoconference is over. No one will leave without a library card!"

Another benefit of working with media personalities is that local affiliates of the big Spanish-language TV and radio networks are willing to help with local publicity if it also helps promote their own programming. So far, the Proyecto Televista team has made friends with the local Radio Unica and Telemundo affiliates, and is camping out on the doorstep of the local Univision affiliate.

Their tenacity is paying off. The first Proyecto Televista program, scheduled for May 7, will feature Radio Unica's Dr. Isabel Gomez-Bassols, a psychologist with a popular daily program on family and relationship issues. The one hour program, involving all three libraries, will feature a short presentation from Dr. Isabel followed by a moderated Q&A session.

Being public librarians, the Proyecto Televista team is excited about sharing their idea if it catches on.

"In our first year, we're doing the legwork in terms of developing relationships with the Spanish-language TV and radio networks, and developing a model for local affiliate promotional support," says Tauler. "If it works, it would be pretty easy to expand these programs to other public libraries with large Spanish-speaking populations, because the networks have affiliates in all those communities too."

Use It or Lose it



Did you know that the internal components of your videoconferencing unit will disintegrate unless you use the equipment at least once a month?

Not really. But the point is, you might consider using it more than you do. There are so many great things a public library can do with videoconferencing that your equipment should be wearing out from OVERuse, not melting down in the back of your storage closet.

In case you're still puzzled about what to do with that big TV with the funny camera on top, here are a few ideas:

Public Uses:

- Your library or your Friends could host a series of readings and discussions with famous authors from around the nation and world.
- Groups interested in a particular literary author or literary genre could use videoconferencing to meet and hold discussions with similar groups in other cities
- Library patrons could use videoconferencing at your branches to connect with reference librarians at your main library
- Children's librarians at your main library could use videoconferencing to read stories to children at your branches
- Videoconference could support your library's literacy improvement programs by facilitating the sharing of tutoring resources among the various branches.
- Citizens could hold video "town hall meetings" with elected representatives and other officials in Sacramento and Washington.
- Your city council meetings could be shared with your city's neighborhoods via interactive videoconferencing in branch libraries.
- Citizen groups could interact with distantly located experts on topics of local concern.
- Non-profit groups could organize distance learning classes, either bringing in outside resources or delivering locally-based resources to distant sites.
- Local schools could use your equipment to link students with distant experts in various subjects, and conduct "video field trips" to science centers and museums
- Arts patrons could work with artists and writers in other cities to organize video literary readings and music/dramatic performances, with discussions afterwards
- Local performers and arts groups could use your videoconferencing facilities to broaden their audience to other cities without travel and lodging expense.

Staff Uses:

- Videoconferencing could be used to provide staff training among your branches or among multiple libraries in your regional system.
- Staff members could take library science courses from San Jose State or other institutions without leaving the workplace.
- Multipoint conferencing would allow your library to hold video staff meetings involving employees from several different branches.
- Library staff or administrators could save travel and expense dollars by using videoconferencing to meet with peers or professional organizations elsewhere in the state or country.
- Lucky enough to be able to hire staff? If potential employees are across the state or the country, save time and travel by interviewing them via videoconferencing.

Applications for Business and Local Government:

- Your library could outreach to the business community by providing videoconference-based reference and research services to companies equipped with compatible technology.
- Your library's videoconferencing facilities could be promoted for use by other branches of local government or by local businesses. These customers could pay a per-use fee that would help offset the equipment and staffing costs.
- Your library could partner with publishers and local booksellers to host video visits when new books are published

Excited? So dust off that videoconferencing unit, turn it on, and dial the world!