This paper describes Stanford’s first steps in using technology to extend its research and teaching programs to a broader community. The primary goal of the Stanford Channel pilot is to demonstrate Stanford’s ability to deliver high quality educational programming on a demanding broadcast schedule. The paper focuses on the complexity and cost of achieving that goal. An addendum to the paper describes the model Stanford is exploring for combining broadcast video and commonly available Internet technologies to provide a “distance education” option for students in Stanford’s Continuing Studies program.
Education Beyond “The Farm”
Stanford’s Experiment with Video

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Introduction
Stanford University today enjoys a reputation as one of the preeminent institutions of higher education. Maintaining that distinction into the twenty-first century will depend, to a large extent, on how the University employs technology in teaching and learning. Facing this open-ended challenge, in October 1994 President Gerhard Casper formed the Commission on Technology in Teaching and Learning (CTTL) and charged it to explore and implement ways Stanford can adapt to — indeed, be a leader in — innovation in educational technology.

In one of its several initiatives, the CTTL worked with the local cable television franchise (Cable Co-Op) to activate a Stanford-based cable channel. The channel’s purpose would be to serve nearby communities. On September 27, 1995, the University launched the Stanford Channel (Channel 51) to Atherton, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, and its own campus network. Since its debut, the Channel has aired nine hours of programming per day, drawn from a broad cross-section of the best of Stanford: lectures, panels, conferences, sports, performing arts, Continuing Studies courses, and faculty interviews.

Now beginning its second year, the primary goal of this pilot project is to demonstrate Stanford’s ability to deliver high quality educational programming on a demanding broadcast schedule. Secondary to this rigorous objective, the Channel will pursue the following activities:

- Test applications by which multimedia technologies can enhance and extend teaching;
- Explore distance learning & continuing education via video and supporting technologies;
- Provide community and alumni outreach and public service;
- Inform the community of the importance of basic research;
- Provide information on the Stanford medical community’s health care resources;
- Provide a laboratory for Stanford’s future use of video in both traditional and developing technologies (cable, satellite, Inter/Intranet).

Leveraging Resources
In April 1995, Stanford committed to launch a cable TV channel pilot project. Six months later, the Stanford Channel was cable-casting to neighboring cities and the campus community. The University was able to accomplish this task in such a short time only by leveraging existing resources from across the University. Video production and delivery require huge investments of time, dollars, energy and creativity, and place intense demands on people and equipment. Over 20 departments and committees joined together in the initial drive to put the Stanford Channel on the air.

Stanford’s Communication Services department, within Information Technology Systems and Services, is responsible for video delivery on the campus and was chosen to provide both project coordination and technical support for the Stanford Channel. The Stanford Center for Professional Development, a multimedia production center in the School of Engineering, provides most of the Channel’s video production services. Knowledge of faculty research and professional interviewing skills are the contributions of the Stanford News Service. In addition, various academic departments donate project seed money and funds for specific programs.
Program Delivery
The Stanford Channel broadcasts over the local cable franchise network, and the University’s own cable network, to five local communities and the Stanford campus. This coverage represents a population of approximately 35,000 cable viewers. Stanford Channel staff are currently making plans with TCI and other local communities to expand the channel further into the Bay Area. Programming is transmitted from the University’s headend to Cable Co-Op’s headend in Palo Alto over coaxial cable, and to a TCI headend in Santa Clara over fiber. The channel is active 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Video cassette copies of Stanford Channel programs are available to faculty and students through the University library, and community members may purchase videotape off-prints of selected programs directly from the Stanford Channel. In addition, Stanford sends tapes to other universities for presentation over their own cable services.

To deliver programming, Channel operators digitize video from Betacam, 3/4-inch, Laserdisc, S-VHS, VHS, or direct satellite downlink to either of two ASC Virtual Recorders. The system has a 12 hour storage capacity. Text and graphics content is created on an Alladin Desktop Station with the Inscriber character generator and can be presented either as stand-alone screens or video overlays.

Stanford’s interest in video delivery goes beyond traditional cable, to developing video delivery technologies. The increasing availability of higher speed communications options within the community, such as ISDN, cable modems and ADSL, increases the production potential of network-based video.

In early October, 1996, as part of Stanford’s exploration of network video for on-campus and off-campus teaching and learning, the Stanford Channel began multi-casting its daily programming worldwide over the Internet’s MBONE and the University’s data network. The multi-cast project employs IP/TV software developed by Precept, Inc. and provides transmission to the Internet community at 128kbps. Though currently in limited distribution on campus, transmission over Stanford’s network is at a higher bandwidth of 400kbps. The project’s effect on network performance is being closely evaluated, and care is being taken to avoid conflicts with other major MBONE events. Future plans include video-on-demand trials.

Programming
The Stanford Channel library currently consists of over 250 hours of original and acquired programming. Through programs like InterChange, which features in-depth interviews of distinguished faculty discussing their research, Stanford is able to encourage an appreciation of the University as a vital intellectual resource. Continuing Studies courses that are offered on the Stanford Channel broaden the reach of the adult-education program and investigate ways in which video and Internet technologies can combine to enhance distance learning. Such series as Life of the Mind, Issues and Ideas and Arts at Stanford capture and communicate the intellectual and cultural excitement of a great university. (For a more detailed description of Continuing Studies courses, the Stanford Channel, and the Internet, see attached Addendum.)

Stanford Channel programming is comprised of the following series linked broadly by subject area and broadcast on a weekly, monthly or occasional basis:

- **The Arts at Stanford** — music, drama, readings, arts lectures;
- **Continuing Studies** — in conjunction with Continuing Studies Program, a ten week course is offered each Quarter. Courses to date include: Europe and America in the Modern Age, The War on Drugs, History, Policy and Alternatives, Gothic Cathedrals and the Great Churches of England, and The Brain, an Owner’s Manual. (See Addendum for more information about Continuing Studies courses, the Stanford Channel, and the Internet.)
- **Health & Society** — issues and advances in health care;
InterChange — weekly interviews with distinguished faculty discussing basic and applied research;

Issues and Ideas — programs of current national and international interest;

Life of the Mind — exploring subjects of timeless interest;

QuadrAngles — Stanford history and current campus issues;

Reel Visions — student-produced documentary films and videos;

Stanford Authors — Stanford writers read from their recent works;

Stanford Presents — panels, symposia and special University events;

Stanford Sports — rebroadcast of men’s and women’s sports;

Teachers on Teaching — award-winning professors discuss the art of teaching;

Other regular programming, produced by partner institutions, includes:

Continuing Medical Education — courses for physicians, from Stanford School of Medicine;

Great American Health Controversies — issues in the health care field, from Stanford Health Services

Health Matters — consumer health series, from KRON-TV;

Internet Roadside Cafe — understanding the Internet, from the University of Washington;

Upon Reflection — faculty interviews, from the University of Washington.

Video programming airs in three 3-hour segments. The first showing is 7:00 to 10:00 p.m., which repeats from 10:00 to 1:00 a.m. and again the following afternoon, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. During non-program hours, the Stanford Channel displays a calendar of campus events, University announcements, the Channel’s daily and weekly program schedules, promotional spots for upcoming programs, and live video of the campus from a remotely operated camera.

Stanford Channel Information and Publicity

Access to information about the Channel is critical to its viewing audience and the success of this effort. Program listings and related information are made available through:

- A FAX-back service for program listings;
- A voice-mail application that provides programming information and takes viewer feedback;
- Listings on the preview channel of the local cable franchise;
- The University’s weekly newspaper, The Stanford Report;
- Weekly Channel Highlights in local newspapers;
- Selected advertising in local newspapers;
- Selected radio advertising;
- Selected promos on other cable channels.

Staffing and Financial Support

Staffing for the Stanford Channel includes 2.5 dedicated FTE: an Executive Producer, an Assistant Producer, and a Program Development Manager. The University leverages substantial additional support from a variety of departments, including Communication Services, Networking Systems, the CTTL, and the Stanford News Service.

Initial seed money for the Stanford Channel was provided by the University, Stanford Health Services and the Stanford Alumni Association. The current year’s budget for the Stanford Channel is approximately $500K, not including leveraged support from schools and departments. Funding
Looking Back: Lessons from Pilot Year One
As those institutions exploring video before Stanford already know, creating a cable TV channel is an enormous job — far more difficult than it appears from the outside. Having now survived a first year on the inside, the Channel’s creators have been able to summarize a number of things they have learned:

- First, a “channel” is a hungry beast that is never satisfied. Programming is an on-going effort, and pacing is important. Fortunately, universities are rich sources of program material, and the academic calendar is helpful in planning out a year’s schedule.
- No less noticeable has been the Stanford Channel’s capacity to eat up administrative time on such issues as production scheduling, tape production, broadcast management, financial control, and advertising.
- The choice of video digitization technology to deliver programming led the Channel’s coordinators up a steep learning curve; mastering the VR system and working through its design flaws proved more of a challenge than expected.
- Local cable franchises do not always deliver an acceptable signal. The Stanford Channel’s staff continues to work with Cable Co-op on this issue.
- Academic departments initially found the cost of video taping shockingly high, but many adjusted their perspective when they came to understand the time, effort and expensive equipment required for broadcast quality production. More departments than anticipated began to incorporate the cost of taping special programs into their own budgets, or into the budgets of supporting grants, and donors came to be pleased that their programs would be taped for distribution to a larger audience.
- Two handicaps made underwriting from non-university sources more elusive than anticipated: the Channel’s geographically limited viewing availability and the management team’s lack of professional experience in fundraising.
- InterChange, an original program in which Stanford faculty are interviewed about their research, provided useful educational opportunities for faculty with no video experience.
- A viewership survey, distributed in February 1996 to Cable Co-op subscribers with their monthly billing statement, confirmed a significant level of interest in Stanford Channel programming among community members.
- Support from the funding enterprises depends on the perception of the Channel’s value as a resource. Assessment and evaluative data are needed to articulate and prove institution-wide value, as well as to secure sponsorships for individual programs.
- The Channel’s first year provided evidence that those who take courses via distance learning enjoy the flexibility that it gives them. Most do not watch at airtime; rather, they set their VCR to record the programs and then fit the viewings into their own schedules. The Channel’s staff also found that distance education students require a level of attention and support that was not anticipated at first.
- The Stanford Channel successfully introduced faculty members to new ways to use multimedia technology to improve teaching and educated the internal University community about video’s many possibilities.
- When well produced, video is unique in its ability to communicate the excitement and importance of basic and applied research.
- Finally, the team’s experience in the first year proved that talented and dedicated people can accomplish truly amazing things.

Looking Ahead: Challenges for Pilot Year Two
As the Stanford Channel enters its second pilot year, there are a several critical challenges ahead. These include:
Expanding of the channel’s availability to a wider geographic area, and expansion of the viewing audience to a larger proportion of cable TV subscribers who have access;

Developing a better sense of the specialized requirements of distance education (see Addendum);

Securing University and non-University funding;

Creating a more stable and mature operating environment;

Moving network delivery of programming to production and implementing on-demand delivery of selected courses;

Establishing video-exchange partnerships with peer institutions.

Conclusion
Earlier this year at Stanford, not long after the premiere of the Stanford Channel, Bill Gates spoke about the rich potential of video technologies (cable, satellite, Internet, video cassette) to augment traditional approaches to teaching and learning. Gates noted that we are likely to see the phenomenon of classrooms without walls more and more, as video and other technologies link people together across the world. Since video distribution technology is evolving rapidly, it is imperative that institutions of higher education explore the many ways through which video can best serve teaching and research. Ultimately, these technologies will link Stanford with peer institutions and the global community and help us form virtual universities. The Stanford Channel is a valuable first step for Stanford in understanding the character and demands of this new reality.
When Stanford University launched its cable TV channel pilot project in September, 1995, the Stanford Continuing Studies program began its own experiment in “distance learning” by broadcasting taped sessions of selected continuing education courses. This Addendum will describe the on-going exploration of a model for “distance delivery” of Continuing Studies courses to members of the local community.

The Continuing Studies Program
Since 1988, the Continuing Studies Program (CSP) has provided adult members of Stanford’s neighboring communities and University staff with the opportunity to take classes on a part-time basis for intellectual enrichment, both personal and professional. The program’s mission is to provide a forum in which Stanford’s neighbors and staff can become part of the intellectual community of the University.

The program offers a broad liberal arts curriculum, with a concentration in traditional humanities disciplines such as literature, history, art, and music. Courses are generally taught at the introductory to intermediate level, and are open to anyone with a high school diploma; in reality, approximately eight out of ten CSP students hold at least one undergraduate degree.

The demographics of the student body and the ever-growing appeal of a liberal arts curriculum underline an important aspect of the Continuing Studies program: students take courses not for professional advancement or technical proficiency, but for the love of learning, pure and simple. Some aim to acquire the liberal arts education they neglected as career-minded undergraduates, while other have reached a point in life where they long to return to the challenge and stimulation of the classroom. The CSP student body also includes the intellectually curious, in search of answers to eternal questions, and avid readers who are looking for a more structured way in which to pursue their interests.

The profile of students in the Program is not unlike the profile of students in other adult education programs across the country. The ratio of women to men is slightly larger than 3:2. Although the range in age reaches from late teens to early eighties, more than one-half of the students fall between the ages of 40 and 64. Approximately 85% of the students have undergraduate degrees and over 50% have a graduate or professional degree.

CSP currently enrolls nearly 4,000 students each year in approximately 150 courses. While the courses provide from one to one units of Continuing Studies credit, the majority of students choose the “audit” option which enables them to attend classes but does not require completion of written assignments. Tuition for Continuing Studies courses is approximately $135/unit regardless of whether courses are audited or taken for credit.

Since fall 1991, CSP has also offered a Master of Liberal Arts (MLA) degree to qualified adults. Candidates for the MLA degree must complete 36 units of course work. These units must include at least seven MLA seminars and a two-unit Writing Project. The remaining 7 units of the 36-unit requirement may be fulfilled by electives chosen from the regular CSP course offerings. The Continuing Studies MLA program has 100 people enrolled.

Delivering CSP Courses via Cable
To date, four continuing education courses have been broadcast to the local community on the Stanford Channel. The first course, a ten-week series of lectures provided by the Stanford Alumni Association, was broadcast during Autumn quarter of the 1995-1996 academic year. The three
subsequent courses were specially selected Continuing Studies courses videotaped for later broadcast on the Stanford Channel. With each additional course, changes in key parameters have led to a refinement of a possible "distance learning" model for Stanford’s Continuing Studies program (see Table below).

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*special distance learning tuition

#1. *Europe and America in the Modern Age* (Autumn '95 and Summer '96)
Instructors: David Kennedy, McLachlan Professor of History, Stanford
James Sheehan, Dickason Professor of History, Stanford

The first continuing education offering on the Stanford Channel pilot was a CSP course that had been professionally taped by the Stanford Alumni Association. Co-taught by two popular and experienced teachers, *Europe and America* focuses on the evolution of liberal democracy from the American and French revolutions to the paradoxes of today’s liberal societies. Of particular interest are how today’s societies face race and gender differences and problems of individual versus community.
The 10-session course was broadcast in its entirety over a ten week period. The delivery model was standard broadcast, one-directional with no interaction from viewers. The lectures were broadcast at five different times during the week to provide flexibility for the viewers who, it was anticipated, would be both watching and taping the shows.

Anecdotal evidence indicated that the lectures were watched, taped and enjoyed.

#2. *The War on Drugs: History, Policy and Alternatives* (Winter, '96)
Instructor: Dr. Joseph D. McNamara, Research Fellow, Hoover Institution

In the summer of 1995, the Continuing Studies Program and the Stanford Channel pilot project joined forces. As part of the pilot, funds were provided to videotape a Continuing Studies course to be offered “live” during Autumn quarter. That course would then be broadcast to the community on the Stanford Channel during the following Winter quarter.
The course selected for taping and broadcast was an in-depth study of U.S. drug policy and its effects taught by Hoover Research Fellow Joseph McNamara. McNamara, former police chief of both Kansas City and San Jose, is a well-known figure in the Stanford area. The combination of his colorful persona and the timely and controversial topic of the course seemed a natural draw for viewers.

What distinguished broadcast of this course from the first was the attempt to engage potential distance learners and interact with them using the Internet. A Stanford staff member who had taken the course during Autumn quarter volunteered to serve as teaching assistant for the Winter quarter broadcast. This “on-line TA” developed two course components that would take advantage of basic computer network capabilities that it was assumed many in the Silicon Valley would have available.

Working with an undergraduate who had audited the course, the TA built a Web page for the course. The intent was to use the Internet to get information to the distance learners that they would otherwise obtain on-site in class. The Web page included information about the course and the instructor and told viewers how they could purchase required texts and a course reader from the
Stanford Bookstore. A detailed syllabus described each week’s topic and suggested readings appropriate to that week’s presentation.

The Web page also provided an enrichment component to the course broadcast. A page labeled “Additional Information” linked the viewer to over 100 other Web sites relevant to the topics the course addressed and served as a kind of on-line “reserved reading” resource. The Web site is still available and continues to be accessed by those interested in the course topic.

The other network component was an e-mail listserv set up for the course. Viewers with access to e-mail could subscribe to the listserv using the Majordomo program. Instructions for doing so were posted on the Web site, printed in course publicity, and displayed after each broadcast. Subscribers were encouraged to post their questions and comments to the list. The TA served as liaison between the participants and Dr. McNamara, who preferred not to make his e-mail address public. He did, however, respond to participants’ questions, and his comments were distributed to the listserv participants by the TA.

It was very difficult collecting evaluative data for the course. The six people who participated in the listserv engaged in sometimes lively discussion; one “student” even submitted an unsolicited essay at the conclusion of the course. Based on the group’s interest, the TA has kept the listserv going, posting updates on discussion of drug policy by political candidates and other individuals and groups.

Anecdotal evidence suggests a few reasons why the number of listserv participants was so small. A few people said that they spent their entire work-day at their computer and chose to simply watch the lectures rather than interact with other viewers. Other viewers, wary of possible political and legal complications, preferred not having their names and e-mail addresses associated with this particular course.

A voluntary voice mail survey conducted at the end of the course yielded twelve responses. Of those responding, three people purchased course materials and signed on to the listserv. When asked whether they would have registered for the course had it been offered for credit, three respondents said yes and one said maybe.

#3. Gothic Cathedrals and the Great Churches of England (Spring ‘96)

Instructor: Robert A. Scott, Associate Director,

Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences

The second Continuing Studies course selected for taping and broadcast examines Gothic cathedrals and great churches in social, political, and historical contexts. Building on the previous model, both a Web page and an e-mail discussion group were created for this second course. The most significant difference between this course and the previous one was that Cathedrals was to be offered for credit. Students were given the opportunity to pay a special, introductory “distance leaning tuition” of $30 to receive two units of Continuing Studies credit. To earn the credit they were expected to complete a course project. Forty students registered for the “for credit” offering of the Cathedrals course on the Stanford Channel last spring.

A second difference was that the “distance learning” students came together twice for face-to-face meetings with the instructor and each other, once about half way through the course and again at the end. This latter meeting provided a good opportunity for the instructor to question the students about their experience.

All twenty students who attended the final meeting reported that they enjoyed taking courses for credit on television and preferred televised lectures to live courses. They said that broadcast courses allowed them to engage in a program of study, the pace and timing of which they could control. They exercised this control by taping lectures for later viewing, typically in 10-15 minute segments, by repeating difficult segments, and by speeding through segments that were boring or trivial.
The students enjoyed the course and were grateful that Stanford was becoming involved in distance education. They had concerns, however, about the lack of administrative support for the distance learner who is taking a course for credit. The students felt the administrative details of the course (e.g. where to purchase books, obtain the syllabus, contact the instructor, etc.) had not been well communicated to them. The on-line discussion group and Web page proved to be of limited value for this course because so few people in the class had e-mail or even access to computers. The instructor did report, however, that he enjoyed and learned a lot from the two or three students who did interact with him on-line.

#4. The Brain, an Owner’s Manual (Autumn ‘96)
Instructor: Joel Benington, Assistant Professor of Biology, Saint Bonaventure College; former Research Associate in Biological Sciences, Stanford
Laure Haak, Teaching and Research Assistant for the Spring ‘96 course

The course being broadcast as of this writing is a moderately edited version of the course taught for Continuing Studies last spring. The broadcast version, taught by the teaching/research assistant for the spring lecture series, offers the latest scientific findings about a range of neurobiological topics that are relevant to everyone. Open to adult learners and high school students who have taken elementary biology, the presentation of material is vigorous but does not presuppose an extensive biological background.

The Brain is being offered for two units of Continuing Studies credit at a special distance learning tuition rate of $135. Those who pay the tuition are given the passwords for an encyclopedic home page developed by the “teaching assistant turned distance learning instructor” that complements the lectures and for an interactive e-mail listserv that creates a “virtual classroom.” Course information and general questions are distributed through the listserv; students who enroll in the course are required to have e-mail capability.

The 21 students enrolled in the for-credit broadcast of The Brain (15 for credit and six auditing) were invited via e-mail to a face-to-face study session with the instructor early in the course to go over assigned problem sets. At the time of the session, a handful of students still had not provided e-mail addresses and were therefore probably unaware of the session. Nevertheless, five students attended and offered some preliminary comments about their distance learning experience. The students were enthusiastic about beginning the course and eager to have Stanford provide similar courses. One student explained that she appreciated the broadcast courses because she had been ill and unable to come to campus. Another student complimented the instructor on the excellent materials made available on the Web site. In addition, the instructor mentioned that one viewer was using the distance education course to fulfill a continuing education requirement of her teaching certification.

Technical requirements did cause some problems for students. The “high-end” Web site, with links to animated tutorials, was not easily viewable by a student who accessed the site through the AOL browser. She was especially concerned about the costs she incurred spending long amounts of time reading the pages on the screen. The above-mentioned gentleman reported that he accessed the Web site from his computer at work during the day because his home machine was too slow. The instructor reported that some of the students were having difficulty with their modems and that they didn’t understand how to post questions and comments to the listserv.

More information about the progress of The Brain will be available at the time of this paper’s presentation at the CAUSE Conference.

Questions to Ask in Refining the Model
With each course that’s added to the collection of broadcast-ready courses, the Continuing Studies Program and the Stanford Channel learn more about what’s needed to successfully deliver and
sustain distance learning for continuing education at Stanford. Of particular interest in the future is what combination of broadcast cable, Internet interaction and face-to-face contact will provide the incentive for Continuing Studies students to pay tuition for distance education courses. It may be that disciplinary differences will drive one or another of the parameters. Perhaps students interested in science courses like The Brain are more likely to use technology and have computer resources available to access Web sites and participate in e-mail discussion. Conversely, students interested in humanities courses like Cathedrals may be less technically adept and less likely to use technology to obtain and communicate information. Perhaps social science and policy courses like The War on Drugs will generate discussion groups and Web sites that sustain themselves long after the course is broadcast and become the epitome of “continuing education.”

Of critical importance is whether Continuing Studies students will find enough added value in courses offered for credit on cable TV and the Internet to warrant their paying tuition for those courses. If, in fact, the audience for Stanford’s mostly liberal arts genre of continuing education courses is taking courses for their own personal enrichment, will they choose to pay tuition for courses they can watch for free just by turning on their TV? Will Stanford need to consider scrambling the signal to keep Continuing Studies broadcasts from becoming a non-self-sustaining free commodity? Or will the “distance learning extras” of on-line learning tools and on-campus opportunities prove to be adequate justification for charging a fee?

Answers to these and other questions will be sought in the next two years as the Stanford Channel expands its broadcast area and continues to explore its evolving model of distance education. Stay tuned!