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July 8 at 8:30am

# Making Money Under the Education Kanopy

By Ted Hope

[Andrew Einspruch](#), [Documentaries](#), [education](#), [Guest Post](#), [Kanopy](#)

by [Andrew Einspruch](#)

Filmmaker Andrew Einspruch recently attended the Australian International Documentary Conference and wrote a series of articles for the event, which he's graciously allowed us to reprint here. These articles originally appeared in [Screen Hub](#), the daily online newspaper for Australian film and television professionals.

The heretical statement came from Andrew Pike, MD of Ronin Films during a session called "Education Rights – Ensuring Profitability & Sustainability". At the Australian International Documentary conference, dedicated primarily to making docos for television, Pike compared making TV doc to an extreme sport. "Like whitewater rafting, it is full of pitfalls. It is full of people shouting opinions at you about which direction you should go and how you should manage your affairs. It's an area with a high adrenalin rush, and a lot of exhilaration. There's high emotion when you get a pre-sale, and high emotion, despair, and doom when you get knocked back."

By contrast, Pike called the education market the "unglamorous area of the film industry," devoid of red carpets, billboards, bright lights, or posters with your name plastered all of them. "It is an area for worker bees," he said. But worker bees can turn a profit.

The education market is, broadly, made up, by schools, universities, TAFES, libraries, and government departments and agencies. Yes, the TV audience may be bigger than the education audience will ever be. But Pike argued that the education viewers are a more attentive lot, an important distinction for filmmakers who actually want their work viewed and considered. Plus, those worker bees targeting the education market

have freedoms their TV-targeting brethren will never know, including:

- **Length.** Education documentaries can be any length you want, and not just fit a commercial half hour or hour. If 37 or 17 or 67 minutes is what is right for your subject, you can do that.
- **Minimal or no intervention from a commissioning editor.** The work tends to be very hands off.
- **Lower budgets.** Education markets don't need celebrity presenters, expensive reconstructions, or heavily layered music. Instead of a \$300,000 documentary, you can make a \$30,000 one – or a \$3,000 one – and still have it find a home.
- **Lack of date sensitivity.** TV buyers are date sensitive. Your four year old documentary will simply be seen as old. In the education market, films only date if the subject matter dates. Pike said some of his best performers were made in the early 1980s.
- **Less restrictive production values.** Was your documentary shot on HD? Or SD? Mini-DV or super-8? It doesn't matter. Again, if the subject is strong and relevant, the education market can find it a home.

In short, what matters is the subject. The rest can be worked with.

“You have more chance of speaking with your own voice in the education market than if you are working for television. I'll probably get shot down for saying that, but it is something I truly believe,” said Pike. “Television is not the only way to make films. It's a paradigm with particular constraints and particular circumstances applying to it. The education market is another paradigm as well, but it is a much bigger, freer, wider world there, where you can be much more inventive and creative, in my view.”

Pike also said that unlike home video, the demand for DVDs in the education market is still very strong. He said that 85% of his sales at Ronin are DVDs, and that is growing, not dying. And those DVDs tend to sell at a premium compared to home DVD sales.

Even so, Pike has worked closely with the other presenters at this session – Kanopy, the strongest player in the digital space targeting the education market. Olivia Humphrey, Kanopy's MD called her company “the Netflix of the education market”, saying they are the country's largest online distributor of video. Not just largest in education, the largest full stop. Their library of 15,000 titles compares to Bigpond's stated 3,000 titles.

Kanopy works with education libraries to provide titles on a subscription basis. Librarians, teachers and academics look at the various titles and choose which ones they want to make available to the students, who can then watch them when ever they want for free. The libraries rent each title annually, and then either renew them (meaning more money for the filmmaker) or not.

Kanopy has put a lot of effort into making their films discoverable through search and recommendation of titles. Humphrey said the strongest part of their service is their proprietary platform for the videos, a platform designed to increase student engagement. Students have option to search and find materials they want to watch to, and request access to them. This lets students surface relevant materials that their teachers may not find, plus they get to watch for free, since the library is paying for it. The result appears to be a more engaged classroom, since students are finding films that are relevant to them.

Kanopy gives librarians rich statistics on each film they have subscribed to. These stats show things like number of plays per title, minutes viewed, and how much attention the film received measured down to the

second. These statistics help libraries maximise the value of their spend, since they can see what is being used and what is not. For example, if a film's viewers never get past 20 seconds, it might not be worth keeping on the virtual shelf.

Kanopy embraces the long tail model. Yes, there are the hits, but there are also many titles that fit a specific niche, like architecture studies. Because films are chosen as need, and can be made available on demand, those smaller niches can be easily targeted and met.

Plus, what becomes a hit is often surprising. Humphrey cited videos teaching how to work with a particular gaming design tool as one of the surprise popularity winners – something you would never see on TV, but for which there is a motivated audience that makes the film profitable for the producer.

For the filmmaker, Kanopy said they offer non-exclusive terms, and work hard to market in traditional and innovative ways to their database of 10,000 librarians and academics. They produce quarterly reports and do not take deductions from payments for marketing or other costs. They ask for worldwide rights so they can make deals in other territories, but are able to geoblock, should the rights to a particular area already be sold.

Andrew Pike, who has put his Ronin catalogue into Kanopy, praised the company for expanding the education market, and for working the on-demand angle so effectively.

Humphrey gave the distinct impression they are willing to take on most films, and encouraged filmmakers to get in touch.

Especially if you have a back catalogue, it might be worth considering.

*Andrew Einspruch is a producer with Wild Pure Heart Productions . His current project is the low budget feature film The Farmer.*

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1. [J.Molina](#) / Jul 8 at 8:30am



This sounds really exciting and good way to make some extra income as a filmmaker.

Is there anyways we can see what's currently being consumed by this market?

2. Glen Bray / Jul 8 at 8:30am

This is a really cool way to get for film makers to get a bit of extra cash. Have you also considered Cayova? They are offering \$10,000 sponsorship opportunities for film makers and will also pay you just for social networking. It's pretty cool you guys should check it out.

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Introductions Another year is in the can, or hard drive, or cloud, or wherever years go these days, and as you can see from the list below, it's been another fun, rewarding one for those of us who love ambitious cinema of the low-budget American narrative variety. While I feel like I write something to [...][...]

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On the occasion of the release of the latest Dardenne Brothers' film Two Days, One Night, and inspired by Chad Hartigan's rightfully gushing essay on said film for The Talkhouse, I thought it might be interesting to peruse, collect, and present some of the best Amazon user comment reviews of motion pictures directed by those [...][...]

- [SUNSHINE NOIR by Evan Louison](#)

(BAMcinematek's Sunshine Noir series ran from November 26-December 9, 2014.) Every time you land in Los Angeles, you can feel the ghosts coming on, as early on as navigating your way through the airport. The ghosts are thick in the air, just like the smog was the first time you landed there, crawling out of [...][...]

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## . A Truly Free Film Culture: an introduction

the inspiration for this blog was [this speech](#) (click to read). Watch Part One [here](#). Read it in Spanish [here](#).

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## . 📱 Jon Reiss TOTBO Tip of the Day

- [THE 2014 HAMMER TO NAIL AWARDS](#)

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- [PlaceVine](#)



- [Storybids](#)
- [XIntads](#)
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## . TFF Required Reading

- [1000 True Fans \(Kelly\)](#)
- [A Decade Of Filmmaker Empowerment Is Coming \(Beers\)](#)
- [Broderick's 10 Principles of Hybrid Distro](#)
- [Broderick's Bulletins](#)
- [Darknet:Hollywood's War Against The Digital Generation \(Lasica\)](#)
- [Free! Why \\$0.00 Is The Future Of Everything](#)
- [Golden Rules Of Web / Advertising Age \(Yakob\)](#)
- [Google Jail For Creating New Film MOdel](#)
- [Henry Jenkins Blog](#)
- [How To Do Almost Anything W/ Social Media \(Mashable\)](#)
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- [State Of Fest Pt. 1: Do Fests Matter? / Variety; M. Jones](#)
- [State Of Fest Pt. 2 / Variety; M. Jones](#)
- [The Economics Of Giving It Away \(Anderson\)](#)
- [Welcome To The New World of Distribution \(Broderick\)](#)
- [When The Audience Takes Control \(Weiler\)](#)

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- [Arin Crumley & Susan Buice](#)
- [Jon Reiss](#)
- [Lance Hammer](#)
- [Lance Weiler](#)
- [Peter Broderick](#)
- [Robert Greenwald](#)
- [Scott Kirsner](#)
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- [Ameibo](#)
- [Breakthrough Distribution](#)
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- [New Image TV](#)
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- [VTMedia](#)
- [Vuze HD Network](#)

## . Truly Free Film RESOURCES

- [100 Blogs For Film Students](#)
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## . **Blogging Tools**

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