

# TV TECHNOLOGY

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## LONG FORM RECORDING

# Volicon Observer: Multichannel Recorder

by Geoff Poister

This is a product of interest to any organization that wants to keep track of what is being broadcast on air or cable. The Observer works like multiple digital video recorders, displaying any number of live television feeds while simultaneously recording them onto a server.

Advanced search functions make it possible to do keyword searches that isolate downloadable clips. All channel streams can be accessed via any standard Internet Explorer, allowing one to monitor selected channels worldwide from any computer with an Internet connection.

The Observer is an ideal tool for archiving, but it has even greater potential for content monitoring. It can search closed-caption text across all channels and displays a clip menu for instant access to any topic is selected. This has obvious uses for tracking ads, news analysis and many other types of research.

### FEATURES

The first function of the Observer is to monitor and capture live television programming. At its most basic level, it can be used as a single-channel archiving device for an individual TV station. The data rate is scalable from 128 Kbps to 4 Mbps. For most uses, 512 Kbps is good, as it provides better-than-VHS quality and conserves storage space. At this rate, 90 days of video can be stored using only 6 GB of space per day. The video can be then be transferred to DVD for permanent storage.

But the advanced features expand the Observer's uses immensely. Using RAID-protected drives, you can build a monitoring system in groups of two or four channels. The hardware is supplied in a rack-mountable



The Volicon recording system

chassis, with monitoring and management of the channel feeds done via a simple interface displayed on Internet Explorer. The only equipment needed beyond the supplied RAID chassis is any standard computer running Windows XP.

Access is controlled by password and different users can be granted varying degrees of access or control over the system.

Capturing channel feeds can be continuous or scheduled for specific times.

For example, a station could choose to only archive its news, or record news at designated times from all of its competitors in the market.

Monitoring is very simple. Clicking on the available stations brings up monitor windows that resize to fit the number selected. You select the desired channel's audio by clicking on an

## FAST FACTS

### Application

Long-form video recording with search functionality.

### Key Features

Can store a day's broadcasting activity in 6 GB of drive space; provides program ratings.

### Price

Single-channel, \$8,995; 2-channel, \$11,500; 4-channel, \$19,900. Expansion beyond four channels is approximately \$5,000 per channel

### Contact

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icon. Each individual monitor gives the appearance of a mini-VCR streaming live video in real time while recording. You can pause, rewind or select any time point for review.

For example, you may want to check a news story that aired five hours ago or on a previous day. You simply click on the clock icon and select the desired day and time. You can synchronize all displayed channels to play at that time as well.

The search and management functions are particularly impressive. All channels display closed-caption text, which allows for very powerful keyword searches. If you type "space shuttle," you will get a thumbnail display with a brief description of every video clip from every channel over the selected time period where the space shuttle was mentioned.

Click on the clip and you can view it, save

