

# Roku adds more 'channels' of video and other digital content

November 26 2009, By Troy Wolverton

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Owners of Roku's digital video player will soon have a bunch more channels to choose from.

The company is opening a new "channel store" from which users can add access to a variety of content, including [digital photographs](#) from [Flickr](#) and [Facebook](#), Internet radio from Pandora, and Web videos and video podcasts from Revision3 and blip.tv. In all, customers will be able to choose from 10 new channels.

The new channels are the first fruits of Saratoga, Calif.-based Roku's move to open up its video player to outside developers. The company expects to add additional channels in the "near future," company officials said.

Roku owners will gain access to the new channels via a software update the company plans to send out to their devices over the next two weeks. Alternatively, owners can download the update manually.

The company is providing the new channels -- and the content available through them -- for free. However, Roku player owners will have to create a user account with the company in order to add them.

Introduced last year, Roku's digital [video player](#) was the first device to allow [Netflix](#) customers to watch on their TVs movies and television shows offered through Netflix's streaming video service. The device drew praise from technology reviewers for its simplicity and its \$100

price, which was far less expensive than comparable set-top boxes.

Earlier this year, Roku made the device more attractive by adding access to Major League Baseball games and to movies and television shows rented and sold by Amazon.com.

Last month, the company introduced two new player models: an \$80 version, the Roku SD, which doesn't support high-definition video, and a \$130 version, the Roku HD XR, which supports the latest -- and fastest -- Wi-Fi networking technology.

The idea of bringing Internet-based and digitally distributed video to the living room has been around for years but has yet to see widespread consumer use. Among the other devices that offer such services are Apple's Apple TV, TiVo's digital video recorders, Sony's PlayStation 3 and Microsoft's Xbox 360. Many of those devices have added access to services similar to those now available on Roku.

What's still missing on nearly all of them is access to Hulu and other similar services that stream ad-supported television shows over the Web, noted Kurt Scherf, vice president and principal analyst at Parks Associates, a technology research firm.

Adding access to channels such as Facebook and blip.tv. "is a nice addition, but it's not the jackpot content," Scherf said. As such, "it ain't a cable killer."

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