

Feature

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Review of Radio Studies teaching

Abstract

This survey of current approaches to the teaching of radio studies in universities seeks to identify common themes and elements of such courses. In addition, it identifies notable examples of interesting, unusual and creative pedagogic approaches, based on contributions volunteered by university teachers of radio in Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the USA. The introduction by Eryl Price-Davies covers the variety of approaches to radio in UK degree programmes, which include theory and practice, critical listening skills, history and archives, vocations in the radio industries, and the actual practice of broadcasting within a course. The contributions that follow this illustrate international examples of some of these approaches. These include the pre-produced radio interview programme as a lecture, 'visualisation' lectures, web-radio production training, individual students broadcasting from an overseas/exchange assignment, and programmes with a developed radio route - comprising several modules or units.

Keywords

Radio Courses
Radio Teaching
Critical Listening Skills
Vocationalism
Student Broadcasting

1. Introduction: some thematic observations on the teaching of radio studies

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Radio studies, especially in the United Kingdom, is a field that has experienced considerable growth and development over the past six years (see, for example, Garner 2003). Some of this development has been at the level of research and publication; other important aspects include the increased profile of radio studies within academia - as part of the broader media and cultural studies areas - and the forging of a series of important connections with a variety of institutions and organizations: ranging from funding councils, such as the Arts and Humanities Research Board, which awards money for research, to the BBC; and including such groups as the UK-based Radio Academy, the representative body for the UK radio industries.

Given the pattern of growth and development, this article aims to offer a few thematic observations related to the teaching of this emerging field, and to suggest some strategic possibilities for strengthening the position of radio studies in the curriculum. The main focus here is on the teaching of radio studies in the United Kingdom, since that is the area with which I

1. An annual publication from the University and Colleges Advisory Service (UCAS) which is the official listing of all university and college courses in the United Kingdom. It is used by prospective students when choosing which course to study.

am most familiar, though there will also be references to the case studies that follow this article, which provide a fascinating glimpse of some of the strategies and pedagogic innovations current in our field in an international context. Another self-declared constraint is that it addresses itself solely to the teaching of radio studies in higher education. There is, of course, a great deal of invaluable work being carried out at other levels of the education system, including radio-based projects with children as young as 6 and 7 years old. Some of the thematic issues I identify are relevant here too, but space prohibits a comprehensive engagement with the full range of educational issues involved with teaching radio across the educational spectrum. This is a limitation that I very much hope future issues of the journal will be able to address - by widening the debate to include further education and schools.

What follows draws in part on the findings of a research project funded by the Learning and Teaching Support Network for Art, Design and Communication (LTSN-ADC), a national body established to support research into pedagogy in the United Kingdom, which I conducted during 2001 (Price-Davies 2001). The aim of the project was to 'map' the teaching of radio studies in UK higher education. Although not fully comprehensive, the survey achieved a remarkably good response: 49 institutions were identified (via the UCAS handbook)¹ as providing courses that specifically listed radio, and of these 30 replied to a detailed questionnaire, including six institutions that claimed therein not to offer any courses related to radio - despite the fact that their own handbooks and websites said they did. Most remarkably, one institution offering a BA Honours degree course in 'Broadcasting' offered no radio content at all.

Overall the survey provided a valuable snapshot of radio studies courses in the United Kingdom, and illustrated some key strengths and weaknesses in current provision. As well as drawing on the findings discovered during the research, here I will also include some discussion of the key concerns being expressed by colleagues teaching radio across Britain. A principal aim of this article is to invite further contributions to the debate, drawn from as wide a constituency of radio studies teachers as possible, both internationally and from all sectors of education, and to emphasize in the strongest possible terms that what follows is in no way meant to represent a blueprint for how radio studies should be taught, but rather to provide some thematic observations on current approaches.

Defining the terrain of radio studies can prove challenging. A key feature of the debates that have taken place on the radio studies e-mail discussion list (www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/radio-studies), and elsewhere over the past few years, have focused on ontology. A recurring theme is the question of what properly constitutes the centre of our object of study - namely, 'radio'. Josephine Dolan (2003) argued for the term 'radio/broadcast studies', and the title of this journal includes the term 'audio media' as a distinct yet presumably constituent component of the broader 'radio'

umbrella. Without wishing to pursue these important debates further here - whilst simultaneously plumping firmly for the use of 'radio studies' as both a coherent and clearly identifiable label - the concerns with terminology and identifying the 'radio-ness' of radio must surely be one sign of a healthy and vibrant academic subject.

One of the key findings of the LTSN-ADC research was that whilst radio is sadly absent from many UK media degree programmes, more and more of such courses are offering at least some radio studies on their curricula: either as a single module as part of a media studies/practice course; or as a substantial pathway or route on a combined studies programme, where the study of radio may constitute as much as 50 per cent of the content of the course, or even more during the final year of study if, for example, students choose to write a dissertation on a radio-related topic. Most of these possibilities are found in degree programmes in journalism, but there are also some distinctive courses which offer radio studies under a range of headings, such as 'Media Studies', 'Broadcasting Studies', 'Media and Communication', 'Media Performance', 'Media Arts', and 'Media and Cultural Studies'.

Some approaches are avowedly vocational, with an emphasis more on training than education, while others are firmly based in the classroom, with little or even no hands-on practical work involved. A wide range of different modules or course units are being taught, from 'Basic Production Skills' and 'Writing for Radio', to 'Women and Radio' and 'Alternative Radio'. The only significant absences exist in technical areas such as acoustics and radio engineering, which tend not to feature at all on radio studies courses, instead being left to engineering and technology degree programmes. The aim here is not, however, to rule out any particular approaches, nor to be narrowly prescriptive as to what constitutes, or should constitute 'radio studies', but instead, I want to identify some of the key topographical features of the radio-studies landscape, and indicate some issues which I believe are worthy of further debate.

Approaches to teaching radio

In order to try and make sense of the variety of approaches evident within the field, the kinds of teaching that exists within those UK degree programmes that do include at least some study of radio might usefully be grouped under the five following headings: most such programmes will employ at least some of the approaches from this list; very few feature all five.

- Theory and practice
- Critical listening skills
- History and archives
- Vocationalism and the radio industries
- Broadcasting

2. Much of this criticism is off the record, though there was notable scepticism and ridicule expressed by radio industry personnel during a debate led by Peter Lewis and myself at the Radio Academy Annual Festival, held in Birmingham 1999, entitled 'Media Studies: Playground or Passport?'

Theory and practice

These are two terms which exist in dynamic tension on many radio studies courses, though they are sometimes regarded as polar opposites. The value of media studies as a field of study has been the subject of much scathing criticism in the United Kingdom over the past few years, notably in the right-wing press, and in the pronouncements of the ex-Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, who in 1999 described media studies as 'the obvious example of a "vacuous" course' (BBC 2003; see also Lee-Potter 2003). There are also those in the radio industries who have been known to sneer at the usefulness of media studies in any shape or form, and especially at the notion that there is anything to be learned about radio that can be taught on a degree course.²

A more enlightened approach would emphasize that it is not possible to separate theory out from practice (at least not in 'practical' work) since any use of the microphone, or editing techniques, involves a complex network of theoretical issues, about production, representation, media power, and the nature of audiences, among others.

That said, trying to adequately integrate theory and practice in the teaching of radio studies can prove challenging. This often manifests itself in the evaluation of practical work. It is a feature of a great deal of media production work in UK degree programmes that it is not enough to ask students simply to produce a media artefact - a radio documentary, for example. They are also most often required to produce a separate written 'critical evaluation' of the work. The standards expected of this evaluation vary greatly, but for the most part it is meant to be significantly different from a simple description of the production process and/or the finished production.

There remains, however, some considerable confusion as to the purpose of 'critical evaluation'. For some students (and tutors) it tends to reinforce the notion that there is a binary divide between theory and practice - the production work is practical, whilst the evaluation is theoretical. Added to this there is the problem of adequately defining theory. In some courses 'theory' is equated with encouraging students to have a more or less detailed understanding of the workings of the radio industries. In other courses the term refers to what might conventionally be described as 'media theory', and includes issues such as ideology, representation, gender theory, Marxist approaches, political economy, identity, community, and postmodernism.

It is clear that whilst there is a great deal of really useful work taking place across a broad range of courses in encouraging students to develop their own critical perspectives (see, for example, the case study on the BA (Hons.) Media and Communication (Radio) at the University of Central England) and to think critically about their own production work and that of others, there also appears to be some confusion over what constitutes radio theory *per se*, and this has implications for the ways in which students are, for example, asked to evaluate their own practical work in a

broader cultural context. There are opportunities here, then, for closer connections to be made between research and teaching, so that 'theory' becomes a more rooted term which can be confidently employed by radio studies teachers.

Critical listening skills

The key question here is to identify what these are, and then to ask how we teach them. Several courses in the United Kingdom, including the one run at Thames Valley University, London, make use of listening diaries, where students are asked to complete a diary of their listening over a fixed period (usually a week), and to listen to as many examples of different stations as possible. This is then accompanied by a critical overview of the output they have heard, perhaps linked to a set piece of reading. Pragmatically this type of exercise has value in at least getting students to listen to types of programming they might not otherwise have heard, and to build some kind of mental map of the output available in their area. Two of the case studies that follow also offer interesting examples of how critical listening skills can be built into the curriculum. McClellan describes the use of visualization techniques, linked to an audio background, and verbal cues, to encourage student creativity. Dubber offers an account of using full-length radio interviews in classroom settings as a means of conveying important information, whilst simultaneously providing students with valuable exemplars for their own production work.

There are undoubtedly many more instances of tutors fostering critical listening skills, though there is still an urgent need for a shared critical vocabulary to describe the differences between 'listening' and 'hearing', and to account for the modes of engagement that audiences adopt with radio. Here radio studies sadly lags behind other media-based areas - notably film studies and television studies - where decades of research into consumption and reception have produced a rich resource base of material for use in the classroom. Many tutors make creative use of audience work related to television in their radio courses, but there remains a gap that deserves to be filled. One potentially rich source of quantitative data comes from the industry. In the United Kingdom the main measurement body, Radio Joint Audience Research Limited (RAJAR)³ produces publicly available quarterly summaries of listening figures, though the fully detailed breakdown of these is only available to the radio stations themselves, for reasons of commercial confidentiality. There is some useful data to be had from the UK Radio Advertising Bureau, though much of this is aimed at extolling the virtues of radio as an advertising medium and attracting additional clients (see, for example, Radio Advertising Bureau 2004). In the past, bodies such as the Radio Authority and the Broadcasting Standards Commission have produced interesting qualitative research into radio listening (see, for example, Millward Hargrave 2000), though with the reorganization in 2004 of the regulatory bodies into one 'super regulator' OFCOM,⁴ the future of such research projects remains uncertain.

3. For further information about RAJAR see: www.rajar.co.uk.
4. OFCOM (the Office for Communication) brings together a range of regulatory bodies charged with overseeing broadcasting and telecommunications. It replaces the previously separate regulatory bodies such as the Radio Authority, and the Independent Television Commission. For further information see: www.ofcom.org.uk.

Encouraging students to not only become critical listeners themselves, but also to understand the repertoires of listening available to actual audiences is a vital task of the teachers of radio studies.

History and archives

History is important in media studies - and this is where radio is most likely to get a mention, even on courses that otherwise neglect the medium entirely. General survey modules, called things like 'History and Structures of the Media', offering overviews of the history of broadcasting, are a common feature of many courses - and these inevitably refer partly to radio, in a UK context, from the formation of the BBC in the 1920s, through to the early 1950s. There might thereafter be a passing mention of the offshore pirate radio station activities during the 1960s, and the subsequent launch of Radio One, possibly a reference or two to digital technology and the Internet and, er, that's it. This is clearly a caricature, but one not without a grain of truth.

There are good opportunities in this area for radio studies to make its presence felt more strongly in the broader media studies curriculum. This is not a concern limited to the United Kingdom. Writing elsewhere in this survey from the perspective of a teacher in the United States of America, Michael Keith has persuasively argued in this review for greater inclusion of radio in courses related to media and communications:

Radio is more than production and performance - more than a DJ and a jukebox. It is, and has been, a significant social force since its inception, but where are the courses that analyse and assess this important fact? This says volumes about the perception of the academy regarding the social, cultural, and historical value of the audio medium. Consequently radio studies lacks the cachet of other scholarly fields.

Access to archives was a key concern for several of those active in launching the Radio Studies Network in the United Kingdom. A sustained period of lobbying has led to some significant achievements in making archival material more widely available, a success that is greatly to be applauded. In September 2003 there was a seminar jointly hosted by the University of Westminster and the BBC which for the first time brought together archivists, historians, social scientists, and media and cultural studies teachers (including significant numbers of radio studies lecturers). One immediate outcome of the event was the establishment of an e-mail discussion list - bbc-history@jiscmail.ac.uk - designed to provide a forum for continuing the dialogue about access to BBC archival material.

There is a danger, however, that the archive can become the fetishized object of radio studies - the holy grail. Josephine Dolan (2003: 72) has addressed this concern, although her conclusion that 'the absence of sound recordings does not suggest a gap in knowledge about broadcasting and/or the history of radio/broadcasting' is not one that I share. Rather,

along with many other teachers of radio studies, I have a genuine desire to have greater access to existing archives - both those held by the BBC and those (substantially less complete) held by commercial broadcasters. Arguably more important, however, is the question of what we would do with this archival material if it were to become available to us. Ephemerality is crucial to understanding radio - especially for listeners. Most radio output is overwhelmingly never designed to be listened to more than once, and in many regards, we lack the tools of critical analysis to make sense of archival material. There is an important debate to be had not just about access, but about use, specifically in teaching. This is an area where a cross-disciplinary approach, making use of the experience of colleagues in film and television studies could prove most fruitful.

Vocationalism and the radio industries

Some courses are more clearly designed to provide training for employment in the radio industries. Berryman, in his case study, offers an insight into the way this challenge is being met at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University. He describes the demands of producing radio in a digital broadcast environment, and deals especially with the ways students are encouraged to develop the skills necessary for the repackaging of radio programmes for inclusion on websites. Duffield provides an account of an ambitious project at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Australia involving students going abroad on field trips and reporting back daily, as international correspondents.

In the United Kingdom there is increasing pressure on many courses, and not just those in what are known as the 'post-92' institutions (the date when Britain's former polytechnics were permitted to become universities), to demonstrate 'relevance' and 'employability'. Some courses include work-placement opportunities as assessed requirements; but there are many more such courses that do not include formal work-placement opportunities for students. Indeed, it is often argued that it is up to students themselves to prove their determination and commitment by securing their own work experience - and many do this, by working for hospital, student, and other community stations, as well as getting their foot in the door at larger concerns, such as regional BBC and commercial stations.

Vocationalism is something that the industries themselves argue for, though it is worth noting that, with only a few exceptions, the 'industry' seems highly reluctant to contribute financially towards the training being provided, beyond the occasional work-placement opportunity, which is usually dependent on the local contacts and goodwill of the lecturer, rather than any clearly structured scheme able to benefit all. Even where work placements form part of an assessed module, these are often provided on an ad hoc basis, and do not form part of a larger programme of partnership between radio studies courses and the industries. For an exception to this, see the UCE case study. A less fragile situation, in which the radio

5. The Restricted Service Licence is a temporary licence issued originally by the Radio Authority, and now by OFCOM, for a maximum of 28 days, once or twice a year, depending on location. It allows a range of different groups to broadcast. These range from commercial concerns wishing to 'trial' their service, to schools, colleges and universities, as well as other community groups. The power output is tightly restricted - typically no more than 10 watts - to provide a highly localized service.

industries might guarantee to offer vocational opportunities to willing and able students, would be a great improvement on the current somewhat precarious arrangements.

Broadcasting

However radio studies is defined, one of its central features is the act of broadcasting itself, yet remarkably few courses include the activity of broadcasting as a core part of the curriculum. There are some institutions that do - such as the University of Luton, Thames Valley University (London), the University of Sunderland, the University of Lincoln, and the University of Central England - and there are others that have links with stations run and operated by the students' union, usually involving an annual or sometimes bi-annual Restricted Service Licence (RSL).⁵

There is a strong case for improvement here. Whether a course is specifically designated as vocational or not, the processes of broadcasting are so central to an understanding of radio, that they should surely feature as an integral component of all radio studies courses. Even if the costs involved prohibit a full 28-day RSL (the maximum period for which licences are granted) - then even broadcasting (or narrowcasting) via the Web provides invaluable experience that cannot be duplicated otherwise. Through personal involvement with issues such as planning; marketing; scheduling; playlisting; studio management; logging; making jingles, trails and promos; and of course, presenting, students gain a first-hand understanding of the ways in which theory - often perceived as 'dry' and remote - relates to the practicalities of practice whilst 'on-air'.

This review of thematic approaches argued earlier that it was not an attempt to provide a blueprint, but this aspect is perhaps one exception to that: many tutors, including myself, would argue that all radio studies courses should surely include the act of broadcasting in some shape or form, as a central part of their curriculum.

Visual and audio media studies

A final yet crucially important issue remains: What is - and what should be - the nature of radio studies' relationship with visual media studies? Do we opt for a declaration of independence, or should we argue for greater inclusion of radio-related material in media studies? In practice probably the best option is to do both - develop separately and do everything we can to get included in the wider curricula.

Production, consumption, ideology, hegemony, representation, gender, sexuality, race and almost every other key theme in media studies can be taught by reference to radio-related material. That way, radio gains something approaching the status it undoubtedly deserves, and media studies can go some way towards ridding itself of the tyranny of the visual. At the same time, radio studies needs to develop in confidence so that it can offer challenging yet relevant courses directly related to the study of the world's oldest, and still most popular broadcast media.

This involves not just focusing on mainstream institutional structures, but including material on alternative ways of organizing and distributing radio. There are, for instance, growing numbers of researchers and teachers involved in community media globally. Radio is at the forefront of community media, and there are increasing opportunities for tutors to draw on the rich body of research being produced in these areas.

Summary

The case studies that accompany this article provide a fascinating snapshot of some of the different approaches to the teaching of radio studies that are being used in an international context. I strongly believe that we need to build on these humble beginnings, to develop a shared resource drawing on as many first-hand accounts as possible, so that the radio studies community can learn from each other. We also need to include a more detailed reflection on pedagogic methodology. In this article there has been little direct discussion of teaching and learning methods, though it is worth noting that the ADC-LTSN survey did reveal an enormous amount of good practice, with an overwhelming majority of courses committed to student-centred teaching: for example, making extensive use of workshops and seminars, and tending not to rely on lectures as the main 'delivery' mechanism for learning. There is scope here for a more sustained discussion about not only what we teach, but how and why we teach it, and - crucially - how we assess it.

This article is not intended to be overly critical since there are significant achievements to celebrate: an increasing numbers of courses, a developing international network, a small but growing range of text books directly related to radio studies - yet there is also always room for improvement. The aim here is to provide a stimulus for further debate and development, not only through the pages of the journal but also through the e-mail discussion list.

Radio has an image problem. Its lack of images, plus its continual designation in certain quarters as a 'nostalgic' medium, are two major obstacles to be overcome. Yet with perseverance and continued pressure, there is every chance that we can both develop the subject area of radio studies, and enliven those media courses that currently do not provide adequate study of radio in their curricula.

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2. BA (Hons.) Media and Communications (Radio): a case study. The specialist radio degree at UCE, Birmingham, UK

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The 'Radio' degree, or named award, is part of the BA (Hons.) Media and Communications programme - which also allows specialization in journalism, multimedia, photography, public relations, television or theoretical studies. The first year is common to the whole programme and covers the full range of media including, in the practical parts, radio production and broadcasting through studio work, portable recording equipment and digital production. For radio specialists, this is followed by a module based on the craft of the radio programme-maker, and an introductory placement in a radio station.

Second-year students spend 70 per cent of their time on radio activities, including documentary making, speech radio, a more involved radio station placement, a study of the development and current cultural place of radio, and modules preparing students to undertake a production project and dissertation in the third year. The rest of second-year studies are taken up by production work in another medium, or allied areas like broadcast journalism or presentation skills, and general media theory.

The third and final year is based around single modules in popular music, work in radio drama, and in designing and running music radio stations; plus a 'triple-module' dissertation and project (each worth 30 per cent of final-year marks), which can be in any area of radio. A final professional-studies module aims to improve students' skills in securing employment or further study after graduation.

The teaching team believes the curriculum covers the key areas of radio production set in a context of developing thinking media workers

who will be ambitious to work towards senior positions in the radio industry. The staff come from a variety of backgrounds including drama and documentary production, music radio and production, station management and radio scholarship. Students have access to a range of facilities, including four self-operational radio studios, one adequate for drama; a digital production room with Cool Edit Pro, SADIE, and BURLI along with music programming software Selector; and portable minidisk players. These facilities are networked so that sound files can be sent from room to room, stored on a server, or sent for streaming on the Internet or broadcast via a transmitter.

The programme's combination of production, managerial and scholarly work makes for a variety of challenges for students within their specialism. The theory modules aim to set a context for the production work, encourage students to think about the organization of the radio industry, the imperatives that drive its development, and the relationship between the radio and music industries. Students research existing stations' organization, their broadcast texts and their audiences, as well as locating the single station in the wider radio system. Particular attention is given to emerging forms of radio over the Internet. The popular-music module expands this context to cover the way that music is important as a business, to other media, and to its consumers.

Other modules encourage students to think about radio programmes, and radio production beyond its dominant form as music radio. The new optional radio drama module, for example, begins with the drama production process and studio roles: students act and operate for each other. They produce sound FX, under the direction of professional studio managers from radio drama at BBC Midlands. They are not introduced to real actors until halfway through the module. Then they work on productions for three or four weeks in a row. Students have visited and worked in the radio drama studio at Pebble Mill. Two assessments are set. In the first, after five weeks, students are given a choice of three short scenes which they have to produce using whatever resources they can muster. The aim is to show that they understand and can manage the process. The second assessment is in two parts: a short scene of their own choice using professional actors, and a 'play-without-words' of their own devising. The 'play-without-words' is an excellent opportunity to develop aural imagination, although there has been a marked tendency to go for shootings and killings. For their short scenes, students have chosen a range of texts including extracts from Giles Cooper and Samuel Beckett.

The radio documentaries and features module has borrowed from the radio drama module in encouraging both 'straight' and more experimental approaches. Students investigate types and styles of documentary and features production, with the emphasis on generating and developing appropriate ideas. Analysis of selected programmes is coupled with 'buying and selling' meetings where students have to

champion their own ideas and evaluate those of their fellows. Insofar as students may wish to produce features which might involve short scenes or readings, they are offered a single class on working with actors. Classes also cover experimental radio and 'sound art', with teaching from specialists in composition and advanced digital production. At the end of the module students have to submit two productions: a traditional documentary or feature aimed at a specific radio outlet, and an experimental documentary which explores the limits of the genre and the possibilities of the medium.

Throughout, an important emphasis is placed upon the craft of radio production, whether it involves driving a desk, operating digital equipment or computer-based editing and production software; or working with people, their voices and other sound sources. Equally important is acquiring the editorial, storytelling, and communicative skills that are central to producing interesting and enjoyable radio programmes. Students are encouraged to join the student radio station and to practise their skills repeatedly to hone them to near-professional levels.

This emphasis on professionalism is also reflected in the compulsory work placements in the first and second years. The first asks students to familiarize themselves with the operations of a radio station even if they only get to make the tea and run errands. In the second they must apply their developing skills, and while understandably not all of them manage to present a primetime show, they work as studio assistants and researchers and some have been known to take a 'graveyard' shift when no one else was available.

The specialist third-year radio station module draws together the students' earlier skills and challenges them to devise and run a week's radio station. In 2004, the station was an Internet-only station adding an understanding of this expanding sector to the traditional skills of branding, music and programming policies, licence applications, music programming and scheduling. They work alongside other students studying broadcast journalism, who provide the news content of the station. Best of all, students experience the delights and frustrations of working as a team to sustain five days of interesting, listenable radio.

Many students build on this module in their final project to run a station outside the formal taught modules, or to work in documentary, speech or radio drama. These major projects allow students the time to really produce programming of substance, with the best results close to if not equalling professional standards. In parallel, the dissertation allows them to pursue some research in a focused study. The range of topics has been wide, from comparisons of different national radio systems, to the distinctive features of a particular station, the development of particular radio forms, or the ways that radio has become part of our cultural and social lives.

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3. Touching the imagination through sound: using visualization to develop undergraduate creativity

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As lecturers we are constantly being exhorted to come up with new ideas of delivering the curriculum and developing new areas of study. One innovation, which has been introduced into radio production units in three undergraduate courses at Southampton Institute, is the use of visualization as a tool to develop creativity. This is a technique much loved by athletes who run the race in their imagination before the starting gun goes off, seeing themselves beating all the others on the track; or Michael Schumacher, perhaps, reaching the first corner at Monza in the lead.

The connection may seem a little obscure and appear difficult to transfer from the athletics track or motor-racing circuit to the classroom but there is clear published evidence to say that this works. Focusing the mind in turn on the individual senses - touch, smell, sight, taste and hearing - can have a double benefit of increased creativity and a more positive sense of personal well-being through reduced stress. That's good news for unit and course leaders, for student retention and for the overall health of the student.

The students are either on a 10-credit Year Two unit in radio production in Higher National Diploma (HND) Design Communications or similar Level One units on degrees in Public Relations and Communication or Corporate Communication. Why introduce the concept here? It seems a perfect opportunity to stress the power of sound and its ability to work with people's senses and emotions to get them to taste, feel and see in their own mind all sorts of objects and scenarios. It also brings a more concrete justification, if one were needed, for the inclusion of creative or experimental audio production units in practical, broad-based communication and business-centred courses.

The exercise tends to last around 15 to 20 minutes but the more experienced would be able to work through a longer session. A typical activity would involve the students, in groups of up to 40, being taken into a calm and relaxed state by the use of deep breathing while sitting on chairs with their eyes closed. There is a background CD of ocean waves playing. The students are given verbal guided imagery prompts by the tutor over the atmos to take them on a walk across a beach, seeing the dawn break and the sun rising in the sky, feeling the heat from the sun, seeing the blue sky, smelling the sea air, hearing birds and the waves, feeling the texture and

heat of the sand, taking a drink or eating a piece of fruit. Each sensory element is worked into the story with a pause of up to 30 seconds before the introduction of the next step. The silence, broken by the constant sound of gentle breakers on the shore, allows each participant to create and take forward their own experience from the exercise. There are affirmations about feeling good, being energized and positive throughout. They walk back along the beach following their footprints and the exercise closes with them back in the same place with the sun having set. There is then a reflection on the sensory experience and the positive energy boost, together with a final affirmation.

Other similar scenarios are possible using audio backdrops such as thunderstorms, wind, fire or mood music. They concentrate on affirmations and stretching the imagination and creating real sensations through a message solely through sound.

There is a substantial body of work already published on using these techniques in schools such as that edited by Erricker and Erricker (2001) in which it is shown that, among other things, visualization can heighten perception, improve clarity of thought, memory and attention. Mann (2001), in particular, argues that using meditation techniques in schools leads to a positive 'shift in the quality of engagement and the learning process'. Fontana and Slack (2002), working with 9- to 12-year-olds, see visualization as a major aid in creative writing. These are the creative and personal development skills which, essentially, are being nurtured in a select band of British primary schools but which are then largely lost in the secondary-school process and by the time the student reaches higher education, are virtually absent within the mainstream curriculum.

At this stage in our undergraduate teaching, the visualizations are experimental. The participation or experience of the student is not a basis for summative assessment but is rather indirectly assessed, through the development of and incorporation into the creative side of coursework both in this unit and, as a transferable skill, in other units as well.

The current formal assessment in our radio/audio units is through a sonic narrative - a story told through sounds with limited speech. Student feedback suggests that experiencing visualization plays a significant role in 'seeing' how sound fits together and tells a story. It is envisaged that this pilot will be refined within the radio units and the positive creative and personal development aspects, in time, will be incorporated into the course as a whole and reviewed for the broader institutional student support framework.

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4. The radio interview as teaching: how listening to a radio show can beat the in-person lecture

Andrew Dubber University of Central England

This is a story about something I discovered by accident. A guest lecturer can't make the slot you've arranged. What do you do? If you've got the time, I've discovered you don't have to cancel, and can make something that is even better. Here's how I chanced upon it.

'Music Industry and Technology' is a third-year module of the Bachelor of Communication Studies at Auckland University of Technology. It is compulsory for radio majors and is an option for multimedia and advertising creativity students. Typically, lectures feature guest presentations from music-industry luminaries ranging from pop stars, label managers and record producers to government ministers and funding executives. Tutorials allow for discussion of the 'topic of the week' in the light of set readings, listening assignments and the guest speaker's input. As lecturers, my colleague and I organize the guest speaker, chair and direct the lecture itself, and facilitate tutorial discussions, as well as the usual setting and marking of assignments and exams. Industry support for the course is enthusiastic. However, the logistics of lining up weekly guests in a pre-set order is problematic - especially considering several (particularly the policy-makers) are based in Wellington, some 660 km (400 miles) away.

One such guest lecturer was unable to arrange his timetable to suit our structure, but he was available the week before he was required. I arranged to meet him at his hotel armed with a mini-disc recorder and a microphone at a time convenient to him. Knowing that I had time to edit as required, I approached the presentation in the same way I would have approached any long-form radio interview for documentary purposes: open questions, silences to elicit more information and liberal use of the question 'Why?' My guest discussed arts funding, citing artists and songs as specific examples of recipients of different types of grants. I had specific areas in mind that I wanted him to explain in detail and so I probed him further in those directions, while making mental notes of moments that had become excessively tangential.

Using Cool Edit Pro, I altered the order of his answers for the purposes of narrative flow (more out of industry habit than from any pedagogical impulse) and I inserted and layered music tracks as required to illustrate his points. The finished product was coherent, well-structured, and waffle-free. There were eight main sections to the presentation, signposted by my questions, and the whole thing fitted perfectly onto two CDs of about 50

minutes' duration. At the Monday lecture, I introduced the guest, gave a little of his background, wrote his name and job title on the whiteboard, and pressed play on the CD player, unsure of what the class response to this incorporeal lecture might be.

Fortunately, in as much as the exercise was an experiment, it was a successful one. The students listened intently, took notes, and identified the rhythm of the piece fairly early on as a made-for-radio item: there would be music at certain intervals, and so regular breaks in the information flow. These breaks provided time to finish jotting notes, compare with neighbours, listen to the music and pass comment. And despite the lack of a physical guest, students treated the spoken word of the interviewee with the same deference they would have afforded a real guest.

There were two observations that I found interesting. First, the talk was personal - one to one. The guest had been speaking to a single interviewer rather than projecting to an entire class. For that reason, his communication was more direct and, I believe, his message more readily absorbed. The language of choice reflected this: 'What you've gotta remember is...' rather than 'It's important that you all pay attention to the following...'. As with any good radio item, it was conversational rather than oratory, and the each member of the audience felt that they alone were being spoken to. Second, it is helpful to have a volume knob on your guest speaker. I inadvertently started playing the second disc at a slightly lower volume than the first. I was about to correct this, until I noticed the students leaning in. They didn't seem to have noticed the difference, but there was certainly a closer attention being paid to the content. I tucked this thought away for later use as a deliberate strategy.

At the end of the lecture, students requested that the CDs be made available to them for listening again later. There was a lot of information in the two hours, and several of them felt that it would be helpful to reinforce some of the content. Consequently, I have made the discs available to the students on an overnight loan-out basis, and to date a couple have taken them home. Several more have indicated that they wish to do so closer to exam time. I believe that this practice, repeated for other classes, will bear good results for learning outcomes.

While the radio-interview-as-teaching-method strategy might not be practical for all lecture topics, we have added it to our teaching repertoire for use when the ideal person is unavailable at the right time, for occasional moments of opportunity such as international visitors, and for when a guest speaker with the best knowledge - but not the best presentation or structural skills - would benefit from a spot of editing.

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5. A debating point: radio in the curriculum in the United States of America

Michael C. Keith *Boston College*

The continuing need for a module dedicated to the role of radio in culture and society was underscored for me at 2003's 'Radio - A Transnational Forum', in Madison, Wisconsin. While a couple of attendees from US institutions (which will remain nameless) indicated that their individual programmes offered such a module, I have since discovered their assertions to be inaccurate, if not baseless. What both of their respective institutions offered were modules pertaining to the role of media in society, with a unit of their syllabuses allocated to a cursory discussion of radio. These essentially were survey modules and far from what I had argued for in my symposium on radio curricula.

This leaves me with an even greater sense that the academic community still resists the notion of embracing a module which examines the unique contributions radio has made to the lives of its listeners and in the countries it has so steadfastly served. Indeed, radio is more than production and performance, more than jukebox and DJ. It has been a significant social force since its inception nearly a century ago, but where are the modules that analyse and assess this most consequential aspect of the medium?

In the United States, 'Television and Society' modules abound in communication programmes, but its obvious counterpart - 'Radio in Society' - is rarely, if ever, to be found. This speaks volumes about the attitude and perception of the academy regarding the social, cultural, and historical value of the audio medium. Consequently the field of radio studies lacks the cachet of other spheres of media scholarship.

One could ask the following question: 'If a subject does not warrant a module in a communication curriculum, how can it be seen as a viable area of scholarly pursuit?' It would seem the proverbial cart has been placed before the horse in this case. It is disconcerting that radio scholarship exists without a platform at the majority of institutions of higher learning featuring programmes and modules in media communication. Unfortunately this situation stems, in considerable part, from the failure of radio scholars and academics to effectively campaign for recognition in the classroom of the social and cultural role of the audio medium.

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6. From on-air to the Web: Re-defining the radio producer

Bruce Berryman *RMIT University*

An issue that we have been concerned with at RMIT (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology) University is what constitutes radio production training in the new digital broadcast environment. Aside from the core processes of conventional radio production that we have taught for decades, what other skills are required of graduates working with digital forms of radio?

In Australia, when a job is advertised these days for a radio producer/programme-maker with the national broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), the tasks required involve web delivery as well as skills in AM/FM programme-making. Where do we draw the line between the tasks of a radio producer and those associated with other roles like graphics and website production?

ABC Online (www.abc.net.au) is one of the top five websites in the country. Most ABC radio programmes are archived online, along with individual interviews, additional information, resources and links. These re-purposed packages are uploaded by radio producers, working with material generated by them in research and throughout the production process. This may not be the case in other countries, where online content is controlled by web designers, and radio producers stay away. However, a strength of the audio on the ABC website is the continuity of production from concept to AM/FM broadcast, then re-packaging for online delivery by the same person or team. This approach ensures that the radio content remains central, rather than priority being given to the graphic elements of a web page and the radio reduced to a minor audio component.

In a changing radio labour market, graduates require the core skills of conventional radio production to produce work of a high quality that can be listened to on any platform: analogue or digital. They also need to develop skills in re-purposing and re-packaging material for different publication outcomes, ones that may interact with other media on a range of different platforms.

Recent changes to our B.Comm. Media Studies degree highlight some of the issues involved in preparing students for the contemporary and evolving Australian radio industry. In the first year of the programme, students do not learn radio or television production discretely, but rather writing, editing and publishing media texts. In these courses they are introduced to audio through exercises in listening, recording and analysis. At this early

stage the courses do not specify any production outcome, but by the second semester of the first year, students have moved into developing the skills associated with conventional radio production. Whilst working through projects in the areas of the interview, documentary, feature, drama, advertisement and review, students build upon the technical skills of production from location recording through to digital multi-track set-ups.

In the second year they develop techniques in live-to-air presentation and production. From this point the programme moves into the area of re-packaging pieces for online delivery. This may be as simple as a rewrite of intro scripts for text on the site, but it usually involves some re-editing of radio pieces to put parochial references into a broader context. At the same time they are learning about compression and streaming technologies to optimize their work for online delivery.

In the third year students are involved in the coverage of festivals and conferences. The structure of a festival requires a rapid turnaround in preparing and producing material for on-air broadcast and re-packaging it to include ancillary information in the form of text, images and links for online distribution. To perform these processes students need a foundation in streaming technologies as well as basic skills in HTML editing and Photoshop. At this level, the radio and television students also work together on collaborative cross-media projects that require individual radio, video and online outcomes. At times these projects operate as stand-alone web productions, otherwise alongside FM radio programming; using the site as a source for further information, links, images, archival material and synchronous chat sessions.

Each year students develop an online showcase of their work. The sites usually aren't as flash as those developed by web professionals, but importantly they are designed and built by the group as a collaborative project that illustrates the various tasks, processes and interrelationships that exist in this form of production. This also provides experience in considering their source material - usually a previously aired radio piece - with other media elements.

One natural concern regarding the teaching of web-based skills in a radio course is that the development of these skills may come at the expense of those central to conventional radio. But the relative transparency of digital radio production software over analogue processes has meant some time efficiencies in learning the technical aspects of the digital production process, and the generic nature of these aspects has accelerated students' understanding of different software tools. This allows more time to think about content issues and how to apply these tools to the ideas they have.

Very little instruction is given in HTML editing, because an increasing number of students now enter our programme with sufficient skills to build pages in which to embed audio, and most now also have some web-writing skills through the use of weblogs in the programme. The idea is not to make web designers out of radio producers, but to ensure that all

students have a conceptual understanding of the processes and are able to generate appropriate material. A process-based learning approach allows the group to share and develop skills throughout the project.

Whilst many of the technical processes of digitization have been assimilated into the production of radio programming through on-air assist programmes, editing software and networking tools, there has been less activity in the generation of programme material produced specifically for the new forms of radio and radio-like services that are emerging.

These digital systems are natural aids to the storytelling process. It's true that an inherent strength of the medium is its reliance upon one sense: that we are able to do other things whilst listening. But in the type of radio that invites active listening, a screen displaying background information could be an asset; and if the talk-back discussion on mainstream radio in your country is anything like ours, it can only be assisted by having accurate information available to people phoning in. We need to ensure that our radio graduates are not only prepared for the contemporary industry in our respective countries, but also shaping and driving the development of innovative forms that use the radio paradigm as a core.

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7. QUT's international radio reporting field trips

Lee Duffield *Queensland University of Technology*

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) at Brisbane, Australia, offers a long-standing journalism programme with specialized interests in radio and television. Well over 300 students are enrolled in the core journalism courses.

A development in the radio programme is a series of overseas reporting field trips, in which students practise skills through working as international correspondents. The premise of the programme is that the mind concentrates and journalism learning intensifies when it is removed from familiar home supports and assumptions.

It becomes forced learning, bringing the students' attention to bear on the story of the day; the need to be well backgrounded; keeping hard deadlines; considering cultural nuances when obtaining interviews, and the need to be able to function well while moving about in unfamiliar surroundings.

Members of the travel group attend pre-arranged briefings each time on their itinerary, e.g. meetings with Members of the European Parliament

at Brussels; and take on a quota of stories - news reports or features - to send home from their field locations.

They have the experience of late-night or early-morning filing sessions from hotel rooms or borrowed radio studios, to supply the campus-based news service on 4EB-FM - a multicultural station for metropolitan Brisbane. Radio is the main emphasis though the student journalists will also shoot video to be broadcast on community television, and produce features for campus-based print and online outlets.

To date the reporting field trips have been for small groups, self-funded except for minor encouragement bursaries, approximately US\$150 each, plus university support with communications costs, and help with arranging budget travel. Together with fees for some briefings, direct expenses to the university for the field trip in 2003, the most expensive so far, did not exceed US\$5000.

In 2000 five students travelled unaccompanied to Indonesia, spending ten days there; in 2001 eight went to Singapore and Malaysia, unaccompanied, for two weeks; and in 2003 ten spent twenty days in four countries of the European Union, accompanied by the writer, a member of the teaching staff, to evaluate the programme for possible development as a core aspect of teaching. Later tours have included 13 to China and eight to Papua New Guinea; and in 2005, four are booked for Europe. Three of the participants have been international students. Each year more than thirty students put forward expressions of interest to receive mail about becoming potential participants in a reporting field trip. The quality of work from the field trips matches or exceeds work done at home base in terms of editorial and production standards.

What must distinguish these expeditions from other learning tours or exchanges is the simulation of hectic routines experienced by radio correspondents - some of the most heavily-taxed operators in terms of having to deploy good professional expertise while in the field. Emphasis is placed on maintaining and exploiting communications with the desk at home; news monitoring in the field; keeping to an imposing schedule; self-management; getting most of the work done while on the road - with very little left for reflective pieces to be written back at the office. The work done is assessed and earns course credit. In most cases the students enrol in an advanced subject called 'Supervised Project', equivalent to a full unit for a semester, i.e. one-eighth of one year's full-time study. In some cases they will supplement the experience with diary keeping on aspects of intercultural contact and communication. Preparation - including four to six seminars for country or language briefing, and the like - then debriefing on return to Australia, demand a significant commitment of time. Usually the travel takes place during a semester break with leave granted for a further week away during class time.

Does it work? Yes, but some of the student experiences and feedback suggests the following words of caution to comparable programmes

wishing to try something similar. It is really suited only to advanced-level students with a more developed knowledge base and production skills, as it is a hard test for all taking part. It is most valuable of all to higher-achieving students who exploit the extra opportunities which it offers. For example, a student who is bilingual and a year older, through having already spent a year overseas on exchange, and who can already function autonomously as a reporter, will have been looking for this kind of opening to push ahead with professional and personal preparation. On a practical note, the organizers have also learned to pace the programme with optimum stays in any one location (3 days), overall duration of tour (14-19 days depending on locations) and provision of adequate rest days (at least 1 day per week).

The course team's conclusions so far are that a model of a small group of four or five students working unaccompanied should be persevered with, but adapted so that it works on competitive entry, with more financial support, increased production output, and increased available course-work credit.

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