

## **Reflections and Lessons from Making Audio and Video Interviews**

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Over the last nine months, we have carried out some 30 podcast interviews with faculty at Cranfield. I had no prior experience in this area. Carrying these out has provided some useful lessons to pass on elsewhere.

### **Setting up the interview**

It takes some time to set up the podcast interview. The first stage is to talk through with a faculty member: the purpose of the interview, how it will be conducted and any concerns they might have. I remind them that I will not ask questions to catch them out and they have control over the final output.

Preparation is needed on where the interview will be conducted. The location of the interview is normally in the individual's office or somewhere where the individual can feel relaxed. This needs to be free of unobtrusive noise, so if it is in a busy area with many interruptions and doors banging, for example, you should move to a quieter spot or a different time. Encourage the individual to turn off and divert any phones, mobiles and also the sound on their computer. The next stage is to settle on a particular article and a copy obtained. The interviewer then needs to read through the article and to formulate some questions.

### **Immediately before the interview**

Make sure you are familiar with the recorder, it is switched on and is recording. Allow an hour for the recording process.

### **Questions**

Based on experience so far it is possible to formulate some standardised areas which could apply to all interviews, though tailoring questions is highly desirable:

Introduction. Saying who you are, who you represent, and who you are in discussion with, plus the name of the article.

General background. Why was the article published, what is the background to the research? You may also wish to include the credentials of the individual interviewee.

Key points. The next question you could ask is what are the key points of the article?

Lessons, practical applications or implications. You may wish to ask in what context and what lessons from the ideas from article can be applied within a practical setting, with illustrations and learnings from any application.

Future research. Next, you might ask, where the future direction of the research is leading and if there are any areas for further exploration.

The interviews should last between 10 and 20 minutes, since for most purposes any longer would not hold your audience.

Go through the questions again with the interviewee before the interview and give the interviewee time to think through and make notes on what their response will be. If you choose to re-record something because of a mistake, audio editing is relatively straightforward.

### **To script or not?**

My experience so far is that most interviewees do not prefer to script, and will probably not be prepared to put the time in to do so, preferring to make notes and do some thinking beforehand. This also has the benefit of spontaneity. A scripted interview may be useful if there is a highly factual or

detailed content to the article.

## **Capturing Sound and Video**

We have used three pieces of equipment to produce sound and video content from the faculty interviews: an Apple MacBook Pro, Zoom H4 digital voice recorder and a Canon camcorder. It should be noted that the audio route is simpler once the process is mastered, than video editing which requires much more time. Typical timescales for the various preparation/production stages are given in the table below.

The Apple MacBook Pro comes complete with sound editing software called GarageBand, which is the preferred route to make audio files suitable for iTunes. The interviews have been recorded using the Zoom H4 recorder, a neat bit of kit that fits into the palm of your hand and records direct to a 2GB SD card using the built in stereo microphone.

The sound quality even at the compressed mp3 setting is very good and the recorder can hold over 30 hours of recordings at this setting (more than enough for our purposes!). During the interviews we have found that it is very important to find a very quiet room as even the slightest sound is picked up on the recorder (even a slightly wobbly table and the recorder will amplify the vibration and make the recording not very useable!)

Its then a simple case of transferring the file onto the Apple MacBook Pro and using GarageBand to produce the audio file, using mp4a/AAC compression which is the format that iTunes uses. You can embed pictures and hyperlinks in this mp4a format and when playing in iTunes this is then visible in the bottom left hand corner, just like any artwork when you download a song from iTunes. GarageBand also offers several hundred jingles that you can freely use to start your audio track. Once you have made a number of recordings and plan to produce them at regular intervals, you have in effect created a podcast channel ready to be distributed via several channels, such as iTunes

Editing audio using GarageBand is very straightforward and any person new to Macs will remark how intuitive it is to use (I definitely have). The final production can also be converted from mp4a to mp3 via iTunes itself.

So for the audio interviews we have made available the recording in mp4a and mp3 formats and also provided a full transcript of the interview as a pdf file. This is to make the material DDA compliant. We outsourced

As far a video is concerned, we have used a Canon camcorder. Again using the Apple MacBook Pro and the included iMovie software have produced a number of video interviews. Video editing is much more computer intensive, so the Mac with an Intel Core Duo processor and 2GB of RAM has really come into its own. If you were doing this on a PC and if it was reasonably up to date, a package such as Adobe Premiere Elements would suffice (the latest v4 can be had for around £50).

Filming using one camera both the interviewee and interviewer can be quite challenging and its best to employ two people and ideally two cameras. However, if you have only one camera, you can either pause and switch camera angles at the end of each question/response or better still film the interview just focused on the speaker and then interviewer can be filmed just asking the questions and this can then be slotted in as appropriate in the editing phase. Again external sounds are very likely to be picked up, so the best place would be a dedicated sound-proofed room. All mobile phones need to be switched off and even the whirl of the fan of a neighbouring computer/laptop can easily spoil the proceedings.

The video interviews that we have produced have subsequently been converted to Flash as this is now a common standard on the Web.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Familiarisation with Apple Mac	2 days
Template production for audio podcasts	1 day
<b><i>per interview</i></b>	
Preparation for interview	2 hrs
Interview setup	15 mins
Interview	30-45 mins
Audio editing/production/testing	1 hour
Video editing/production/testing	3-4 hours

Typical timescales encountered in production of audio/video interviews