

The Simple Guide to Academic Podcasting: Post-Production and Audio Platforms

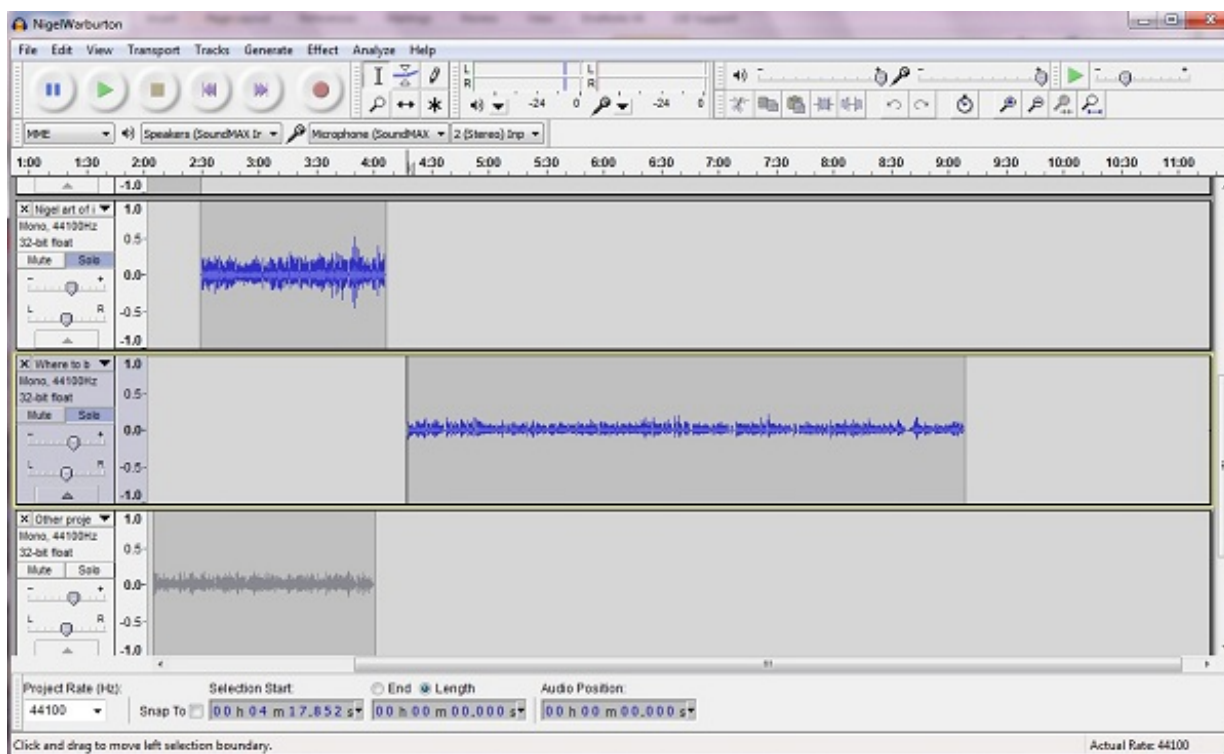
 blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/03/01/the-simple-guide-to-academic-podcasting-postproduction/

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In her final post on academic podcasting, Digital Editor **Cheryl Brumley** talks about post-production and beyond. She gives tips for the novice sound editor, discusses the variety of sound platforms available online. She also gives a list of podcasts that might inform and inspire your own audio project.



In my [previous Editor's Column](#), I talk about how good sound is a key element in podcasting but it need not be intimidating. The right microphone paired with the right recording equipment will greatly improve the quality of sound you collect. In turn, this improved quality will make for a smoother editing process. However, many first-time podcasters avoid delving too far into the seemingly complex landscape of sound editing, failing to see that at its most basic it is a straight-forward process. Yes, one that involves great patience and a few hours of familiarity-training (see: playing around) but this shouldn't put off even the busiest of academics. Even a little time spent cropping your podcast down to the essentials and cleaning-up any distracting flaws will go far in making your podcast sound like a professional production.



The sound editor [Audacity](#) should be the novice's first port of call. It can be downloaded for free and works on the majority of computers. Luckily, most digital ventures today are well-trodden and well catalogued. Audacity is no different – the cup especially overfloweth on [YouTube](#) and on [Audacity's own help forum](#). The programme is hugely popular with musicians so the more complex tutorials generally don't pertain to speech editing but there is most likely to be a video or comment related to your particular podcast quandary.

Here are some basic tips to get you started on Audacity:

Importing Audio

Your recorder will most likely file under an MP3 or WAV format but Audacity also accepts a host of others. To import

your interview, simply go to File: Import: Audio. You might import more than one interview or eventually layer-in some music, they will simply appear one atop the other.

Switching to mono

If you recorded in stereo rather than mono (the latter which is recommended for voice recordings), there are two ways you change the settings in Audacity. You could click on Tracks: Stereo to Mono or simply click on the drop-down menu on your audio box and find 'Split Stereo Track to Mono'.

Layering sound and music

If you are interested in a magazine-style format or you simply want music layered into your podcast, you will need to grow accustomed to handling several different audio tracks at once.

Audacity's editing tools sit just to the right of the record button. Most important for layered sound is the time shift tool (horizontal arrow) which allows you to move your tracks to their desired position.

'Fade In' and 'Fade Out' (under 'Effects') also help smooth out music transitions.

For Creative Commons music sites see: FreeMusicArchive.org and FreeSound.org

Cropping

The cropping tool looks like a pair of scissors on the top-right side of Audacity (you can also use the delete key on your keyboard). This is every editor's best friend. Just highlight the part of audio you want to crop out and press the scissors to delete. Look out for anything which may be distracting to the intent listener, this includes and overuse of 'uh's and 'um's, long pauses, or even whole portions of an interview. A podcast cut down to only essential content will keep your listener's enthralled from beginning to end. When you crop a part of speech, bring your selection tool to just a few seconds before the point of change and listen over the audio again to ensure you made a smooth cut.

These editing basics are enough to get you started. If you grow more interested the medium, you may find Audacity doesn't address all your needs. Pro Tools, Logic Pro and Audition are all very popular sound editors but come at a high-price. Lynda.com has some great tutorials on these programmes for a fee.

Audio Platforms

To ensure your finished product reaches the widest audience possible, consider rolling out your podcasts on several different audio platforms. The most natural place to start is iTunes and iTunes U. The latter is a place specifically for academic podcasts and videocasts, but iTunes itself reaches a greater share of overall iTunes customers. Information on how to upload your podcast to iTunes can be found [here](#) and for iTunes U [here](#).

Both Soundcloud and Audioboo have become increasingly popular and allow greater interaction with audio than iTunes. Both sites give embed codes so you can upload a player on your blog or website. The players give embed options for flash supported browsers or HTML5 but note there are some reported issues with these players appearing on iPads and iPhones.

Additionally, you might want to check if your university will upload your podcasts to their iTunes account and other platforms. Most universities have well established followers and RSS subscribers and if you are lacking in online visibility, this is most likely the best way for you to develop regular listeners.

Social Media

If you conducted an interview, find out whether your interviewee is on Twitter and mention them in your Tweet. If your interviewee is high-profile, this is also an effective way to reach an audience beyond the limits of your own.

Tweeting your podcast regularly using relevant hashtags could likewise build a regular audience for your podcasts. For tips on raising your academic profile, download the [Twitter guide](#) from this blog.

Posts on Facebook are best done by using the [Soundcloud's app](#) which integrates your activity on the site to your Facebook timeline. You could also create a page for your podcasts and garner 'Likes' from interested followers but do note Facebook is currently charging for the promotion of page posts which can drastically limit your audience.

You always emulate the ones you love

Finally, listen to podcasts regularly and often. This will train your ear and keep you up-to-date on what is popular in your academic field (and where you can improve upon already existing content). If there is a podcast that you are particularly fond of, don't be afraid to emulate its format and style.

The following academic podcasts are a particularly good source of inspiration:

[PodAcademy.org](#) uses freelance podcasters to conduct their interviews and serves as a good example of what music and narration can bring to your audio project.

[Justice with Michael Sandel](#) is a videocast which is also available in audio. The philosopher actively engages with students in a lecture theatre on a single topic relating to justice (one of the most popular courses in Harvard's history). These videocasts provides a great example of how lectures, edited down to the essentials, can be both interesting and educational especially for the entry-level listener. See also his [Public Philosopher](#) lectures for BBC Radio 4.

History podcasts like the [Top 20 on this list](#) are especially good for the newbie as they emphasise the importance of storytelling in aiding the dissection of weighty academic topics.

One should also explore the full-breadth of what audio can bring to a subject, by listening to these highly innovative podcasts and audio projects:

[One in 8 Million](#) is an award winning series from the New York Times featuring interviews with everyday New Yorkers. The stories are simple but completely enrapturing.

[Hackney Podcast](#) led by sound artist Francesca Panetta, these podcasts feature audio collages in Hackney, London. Paired with noise-cancelling headphones, these podcasts make for a disorientating, other-worldly experience. Utterly brilliant.

[Radio Lab](#), as mentioned by Nigel Warburton in the below interview, are science podcasts with a strong storytelling backbone. Listen and listen often.

*In the second **Editor's Column Extra**, I asked [Nigel Warburton](#), Senior Philosophy Lecturer at the Open University and host of the hugely popular podcast [Philosophy Bites](#), what advice he has for the budding academic podcaster. He also discusses the importance of editing and why 'thinking like a radio producer' is essential.*

Download the slideshow from the LSE Impact Breakout Session on Academic Podcasting [here](#).

And of course you can listen to the LSE Review of Books podcasts by visiting: blogs.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/podcasts

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[podcasts](#). Cheryl joined the PPG in January 2012 and is a graduate from the LSE with an MSc in Theory and History of International Relations. Cheryl previously conducted research into social media and the Arab Spring at the Regional Centre for Conflict Prevention in Jordan, and researched for BBC World Service radio programmes, *The Forum* and *The World*, on work experience.

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