

What about... unexpected technical and support problems?

Topic Summary

This document reports on some of Coventry University's experiences with lecture capture room installations. Retrofitting existing theatre-style lecture rooms with new technology can be problematic and may incur hidden costs in time and money.

Coventry experienced a number of practical restrictions and other effects based on room architecture and unexpected issues.

Resource Summary

Topic: Technical issues and hidden costs

Authors: Andy Syson

Institution: Coventry University

Target audience: Managers, technical staff

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Comment:

Things to Consider

- Retrofitting an existing room for lecture capture will be more problematic than including lecture capture in a new room design: e.g. camera placement may be determined by the architecture of a room
- Hidden costs may appear in the form of work by estates, e.g. laying cable, installing shelves for cameras
- Another hidden cost may involve an intermediary level of technical support staff between room-level and server maintenance: someone to troubleshoot operational problems and submit tickets to the vendor, liaise with IT services, manage technical issues with the vendor's scheduler and control panel, etc.
- The status of room installations can change unexpectedly- mics may go missing, appliance boxes may fail, equipment may be turned off or unplugged

Practical Suggestions

- Common problems when retrofitting rooms involve difficult camera placement, inadequate lighting, distracting backgrounds, overheated podiums causing the capture appliance box to fail, the need for estates work to accommodate more outlets, etc.
- If you have a choice, locate the podium to the left of the main screen- When playing back the capture, lecturers who tend to reference the screen will then be looking in the 'right' direction.
- Some form of notice for lecturers, like LED lights on the podium to indicate mic, camera, and PC are on
- Podium mics are usually already installed and easy to hook into a capture system, but restrict the lecturer to the podium (which may be desirable). Wireless mics allow more movement but can be expensive, difficult to keep track of, and may involve more work for the lecturer.
- It is possible to install an on-off switch on podium mics so lecturers can switch it off if they say something they don't want recorded, but if the next person does not realize the mic is off their capture is ruined.
- The first recording of each first term for each room ought to be done by someone just checking the system. Cleaners may have turned equipment off, cables may have been unplugged, etc.

Resources

ELTAC document: What About... camera choice and installation advice?

ELTAC document: What About... issues with room lighting?

ELTAC multimedia: Issues with delivery and room installations

Author: Andy Syson