

What about... camera choice and installation advice?

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.

At Coventry we looked at a number of options when choosing a camera and some of our decision-making has been represented here. We also give some general recommendations regarding a number of issues with camera installation, such as placement and background.

Resource Summary

Topic: Installation, cameras

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Institution: Coventry University

Target audience: Managers, technical staff

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Comment:

Things to Consider

- Students and tutors do tend to like having video in lecture captures and feel it adds some familiarity to the recording. Fully equipping rooms is more expensive but may increase the perceived value of the captures.
- Some lecturers express a desire for a camera which automatically tracks their movements, but these tend to be difficult to find, prohibitively expensive and may invite other issues such as capturing student images.
- Camera placement may be determined by the room's architecture or by the camera itself.
- More sophisticated and powerful cameras are more expensive, but may offer more flexibility with placement, e.g. can zoom in from farther away, can be mounted from the ceiling.
- The area behind the podium can make a poor background for the video.

Practical Suggestions

- Cameras should be mountable both from the ceiling and a shelf.
- We felt it was better to buy more sophisticated cameras than we needed, so they could be located near the front, rear, or side of the room and could adjust recording angle with zoom, pan and tilt. Budget cameras would have made a more costly testing phase and been more difficult to install, e.g. the need to install a pole in the right place a certain distance from the speaker. Cheaper, more limited cameras may be more feasible if a lecture room is being designed from scratch.
- Before affixing the camera, check the lighting, angle, background, etc. although ultimately there may not be much you can do to get a better picture.
- White, clear walls and whiteboards may cause the camera to adjust to the brightness, making faces too dark. A simple solution Coventry employed was to paint the wall behind the lectern a medium blue.
- Overly cluttered backgrounds (e.g. fire exit notices, banks of switches, noticeboards, etc.) can be distracting in a video. It may be feasible to have rollaway screens or partitions behind the lectern.

Resources

ELTAC document: What About... issues with room lighting?
ELTAC multimedia: Issues with delivery and room installations

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