

Podcasting 101 for researchers

If you talk about it, you can podcast about it

More than ever before, being a good communicator is an essential skill to advance in an academic career. Podcasts have proven to be an excellent tool for researchers to disseminate their research, expand their network, and establish useful professional connections. But where to start? And how much work is it, really? Will I manage to do it “on the side” of my lab work?

This introduction course will answer all these questions, and much more. You can take the word of a once full-time researcher now full-time communicator, who has interviewed world class experts at the European Commission, CERN in Geneva, NASA in Los Angeles, the US Department of State in Washington, and of course the best Belgian talents in Brussels, Ghent, Louvain-la-Neuve and Antwerp among others.

The course comprises a theoretical module (lecture) and a hands-on session (multimedia editing and production). That’s why the tools provided in this course go beyond podcasting: they will enable academic at any stage of their career, and irrespective of their field, to improve their toolbox in the communication domain. After all, nobody can *afford not to communicate* today, it doesn’t matter whether they embrace this professionally or not.

Target audience

The course suits everyone involved in academia, at any career level: undergrads, grad students, postdocs, professors, and admin people welcome. The field of expertise is not relevant, this is a cross-domain course.

The reasons that may motivate an undergraduate student or a professor to start a podcast may differ, but meeting on the common ground of an interest for communication can be fruitful for everyone.

Trainer

Dr. Federica Bressan - podcast@federicabressan.com – <http://federicabressan.com>

An international researcher from 2009 to 2021 (Italy, Belgium, United States), Bressan has been active in communication since 2018, with previous experiences in radio, print media, and television. She currently works as a full-time communicator, multimedia journalist, and podcaster.

She produces the podcast Technoculture (<http://technoculture-podcast.com>) for which she has interviewed notable experts at NASA, CERN, the US Dept. of State, the New York Public Library, Hollywood, European and American universities, among others.

She has collaborated with scientific publishers and organizations, producing video interviews collected on her YouTube channel (<http://youtube.com/c/wyfiwyg/>). She produces independent interviews on science communication, technology and society, and writes articles on technology and the startup culture.

Audio and video editing skills, image processing, programming and on-air presentation skills.

Requirements

No previous experience on the content of the course is required.

Stable internet connection.

Maximum number of attendees: 30

What you will learn

This course offers a comprehensive overview of what it means to engage with science communication today, especially wearing a double hat as researcher and communicator/podcaster. We will discuss techniques as well as sustainability, because communication is demanding and there are only so many hours in a day. Communication should not be a burden for researchers, but an added value. In this course, I will show many levels of engagement in which researchers can have a positive impact on society while promoting their careers.

Podcasting has a huge return on investment for a researcher, in direct and indirect ways, including the most obvious: expanding your network, learning new things by speaking to world-class experts directly, and establishing useful professional connections.

The course will discuss the reasons to start a podcast, how to go about it in terms of strategy and practical challenges. We will cover storytelling, equipment, setup, budget, subscriptions, skills you need to develop or people you need to hire. How to publish your podcast and most importantly how to keep it afloat. Many podcasts start with great ambitions and die after seven episodes. Make a plan and keep at it, because *you* will harvest your sweet corn at the end of the summer.

During the hands-on session, we will approach the basics of audio and video production, including the production of social media friendly multimedia objects like audiograms. This session aims to enable attendees to go home and start working on their podcast autonomously. The extent to which they can use this knowledge goes beyond podcasting, and will enhance their ability to present their research and themselves more effectively and creatively.

Preparation before the course

Students must have their own laptop.

Install Audacity, a multi-platform free software for audio editing: <https://www.audacityteam.org>

Install DaVinci Resolve, a multi-platform free software for video editing:
<https://www.blackmagicdesign.com/products/davinciresolve/>

A week before the course, I will prepare an **info sheet** (including instructions to install Audacity) and a **survey** with general questions about their experience and wishes with podcasting.

The day before the workshop, I will share a link to **download** the audio and video examples needed for the hands-on exercises.

Goals

The course is an entry level to podcasting but it aims to provide a complete overview of the challenges that anyone in podcasting faces, so that at the end of the course attendees should be able to make their own plan for a podcast production, relying on tools that have been tested on the field, and thus having developed self-confidence and optimism towards their success.

More specifically, the goal of the lecturing part is to cover all the challenges and hidden pitfalls that you may encounter on your way to producing and maintaining a podcast. Secondly, we will cover some technical aspects of how podcasts work, how to produce them, and the goal is to enable attendees to make their own production without being put off by technical difficulties and without having to depend on an external technician/editor/etc. which normally takes the lion's share of the budget.

Teaching methods

Lecturing and discussion. I will use slides (handouts), show material online, give audio and video examples.

For the hands-on session, I will lead structured exercises for which I will have delivered the material beforehand. Attendees will work on their computers.

Course material

Notes.

Document with structured info on how to set up your podcast.

Document with list of useful resources.

E-books on podcasting upon request.

Audio and video examples.

(All the material will be made available to the attendees during and after the course)

Total time investment

The course can be organized in the form of a lecture (2-3 hours), a half-day lecture (4 hours) or a two half-days theory+practice workshop (4+4 hours). It is possible to expand the hands-on session to achieve a maximum of a 10-12 hours masterclass.

I am happy to build the program together with the institution, to best match the participants' interested and needs. I refer you to the detailed program below in order to pick the modules that you deem more relevant to your audience.

Budget

Budget can vary according to the number of hours, whether it's online or in person, whether the course is embedded in a summer school, a stand-alone training course, a doctoral school activity, etc.

This is open to negotiation, but for reference, the standard rate I have normally been offered by academic institutions is 100 euro / hour after taxes.

Portfolio quadrant

Domain specific Skills

Transferable skills

Cross-domain skills

Students' feedback

Awaiting the formal evaluation by the institutions where I have delivered the course in 2021. The following are some comments from the students in the Zoom chat:

Nadia: Thanks! I learned a lot!

Cora: Thanks this was really really great

Irina: thank you so much! I got answers too many questions, including questions I didn't know I had :)

Phebe: All the sites and practical tips are super handy, thanks!

Flore: This was really interesting! Thank you :)

Andreas: Thanks for the useful tips i really enjoyed the course!

Chloë: Thanks a lot!

Detailed program

Introduction

- Stats on podcasting today; popularity; audiences; money on the market
- What makes podcasting for researchers unique
- Podcast taxonomy: what does it take to produce a podcast? Professionalization of the field, professional figures, competences, job opportunities
- Types of podcasts; from the viewpoint of the genre (narrative, interview, solocast, etc.) and the viewpoint of production (highly produced, e.g. narrative, documentary, to light production, e.g. chatcast, etc.)

The landscape is changing: a look at podcasting today

- Subscription system; Apple and Spotify new platforms; how this impacts content creators

How it works

- RSS feed: what is it? How does your podcast get distributed on all platforms? Which platforms?
- Hosting platforms/services + new platforms with additional services like recording/editing, collaborative platforms/tools (Anchor, Buzzsprouts, LibSyn, Zencast, Riverside, Squadcast, Transistor, Streamyard, Descript)

Setup

- Equipment, requirements, decisions & budget
- Microphones, lights, software, etc.
- How to optimize the room you're recording in vs. how to deal with a mobile setup
- Practical tips on setting up your recording/production workflow (from background to backups...)
- Video with fellow podcasters in the US explaining their workflow

Recording

- How to test your equipment before hitting record
- Different setups for recording: locally, remotely, on Zoom/Skype/other
- A special look on how to record on Zoom (separate tracks, HD video, etc.)

Format and style

- How to put together a new show: from concept to action (checklist)
- Packaging: multimedia materials to go along with your podcast
- Listening exercise (with examples selected by the students)

Promotion

- Podcast marketing
- Podcast SEO
- Leveraging social audio (Clubhouse)

Legal aspects

- Disclaimer form / informed consent / release form for your guests
- Copyrighted material in your podcast: fair use of music, video, etc.
- Monetization: some legal implications

HANDS-ON TRAINING SESSION

All software tools used in this workshop are free.

Audio editing with Audacity

We will learn to:

- Navigate the interface
- Choose I/O devices
- Open vs. import tracks
- Rename tracks
- Selection tools (cursors)
- View tools, e.g. zoom in (⌘+1), zoom out (⌘+3)
- Track edit tools, e.g. split (⌘+I), label (⌘+B), C for cut preview
- Adjust track volume, fade in/out, duck audio
- Mix and master
- Save project vs. export audio

Exercises: from editing a single track recording to building a full podcast session with music and sound effects.

Theory on digital audio (functional to the above module)

- Formats (compressed vs. uncompressed)

Multimedia miscellany

- Animated GIFs from still and moving pictures
- Audiograms
- Online graphics and tools using <https://ezgif.com>, Headliner, Canva
- Doodle videos

Video editing with DaVinci Resolve

We will learn to:

- Navigate the interface
- Import media from different sources
- Split tracks and move them around
- Synch audio and video
- Save a project vs. export video
- Adding and managing subtitles

- Making the most of a Zoom recording

Exercises: from editing a single video track to syncing audio and video from a Zoom recording and exporting a finished clip