

## Cardonald College: Digital Convergence Programme

Hi I'm Theresa Duffy from the JISC Regional Support Centre Scotland South & West and I'm joined today by my colleague Mark Clark, eAdvisor for Technology & Infrastructure Management. We are here today at Cardonald College with Kathleen Morgan, Senior Lecturer in Journalism and Dario Sinforiani, Senior Lecturer in Television in the School of Digital Media.



Kathleen Morgan & Dario Sinforiani

Theresa: So we are here today to discuss your case study on Digital Convergence Programme (DCP). I wonder if you can give us a bit of a background, Dario, on how this programme came about?

Dario: Well, the Digital Convergence Programme started as CPD for current working professionals. There was a call from the STUC under the Scottish Union Learning Fund to run a number of CPD courses for Union members and this one was for The National Union of Journalism (NUJ) members. They wanted courses in digital convergence, principally in training print journalists and photographers – that's how it started out at least – in video production techniques, basically in the ability to put together little video based stories using, likely mobile cameras, laptop editing and

then uploading them to the web. So, we answered that call and we were successful in getting that tender and we started running courses from that point. We've run them in conjunction with the NUJ, so we've developed them with the NUJ and we've delivered them in conjunction with the NUJ as well, so, it has grown from that point. We've now been running for around 18 months and it's usually myself or another trainer from Cardonald, plus a trainer from the NUJ who work together and deliver to groups of round about 8 people. We deliver these courses all around the country and its not just in journalist. We've delivered to PR people, to television professionals... basically to working media professionals, mainly freelance union members who are trying to add further strings to their bows and to their career. These courses have two levels and they are intensive three and four day courses in which people learn to plan, shoot, edit, encode, upload video features.

Theresa: It sounds very interesting. How many courses have you run altogether?

Dario: We've probably run about 14 or 15 of these courses between the level one and level two since November 2009. We ran some pilots in '09 – '10 and then we got some funding to run some more between 2010 and 2011. We've just completed in February the 2010/2011 courses and we are hopeful of running them again through 2011 – 2012.

Theresa: And the funding?

Dario: The funding has been through the STUC Learning Fund. But we've also developed the courses in slightly different ways and so the Sector Skills Council for Creative Media which is Skillset – they will provide support for people working in media industries to attend courses. So we've developed a version of the course for that as well and we hope various other kinds of ways of packaging the course. We're intending to set up a real introductory version of the course that will be eligible for Individual Learning Account (ILA) support and we're hoping to deliver that to interested people including students here and possibly rolling it out to other educational institutions as well. So we are looking at how many ways we can repackage what we've got into maybe bite sized introductory chunks. Maybe at some point, more advanced level than what we are doing, to get as broad an audience as we can get.

Theresa: And how are you marketing this course? Word of mouth?

Dario: With the STUC version, the NUJ has marketed it to its members and the course is well over subscribed. There are waiting lists around the country for the course. For the version that we are running through Cardonald, we are doing emails shots, website etc.

Theresa: Right, so it's building up the actual reputation of the College as well.



Dario Sinforiani

Dario: We are and the fact that we are delivering these courses to working media professionals obviously means that we can potentially really getting a good boost for publicity through that. If people are happy with the course then it's people working in the media. For one thing, that is a relatively close-knit community as in people know people, and for another thing, the fact that they are in the media themselves. We had a write up on All Media Scotland after one of our courses, from a journalist with a long track record, who just wrote up about how good the course was and therefore that helped to generate more publicity than us trying to pay for marketing ourselves. If people coming off the course are writing up about it and saying how good it was, that is the best kind of marketing we could get.

Theresa: Absolutely. Did you find any challenges when you were organizing the course? Any pitfalls?

Dario: In the first instance, when we ran them as pilots we were running with two people sitting around a laptop. At that time we were training photographers and journalists and quite often what you would get is that they would work along demarcation lines. If you were filming a little interview-based feature, you would always see the journalist who would ask the questions and the photographer would be operating the equipment. The college invested in equipment specifically for training, so we've now got a full suite of 8 laptops, 4 complete camera kits specifically dedicated to training, so having more kit and actually being aware, making sure that you set up tasks and such that people had to be hands on, I think that helped a lot. The fact that we now have all the kit means that we can go anywhere. We are not tied to the kit that is attached to a socket in the college.

Mark: What sort of platform is it – PC or Mac based?

Dario: It's Mac based. We run the two market leaders for postproduction – Final Cut Pro and Avid. At first we did actually use Boot Camp to give people the option of looking at a PC interface, but with what we are teaching them, we've just gone back to being Mac only, so that if we are demonstrating something they can see the same interface.

Mark: And would that reflect the industry standard then?

Dario: You will find a lot of photographers would have Macs and would be using Macs. It is something that people start off being scared by, if they look and see a Mac interface. But we teach them what they need to know with the Mac interface and it hasn't really been a problem. We do have a couple of PC laptops, which we have used as well, but it's not really been a problem. People think it's going to be a problem on the first hour of day one but we get them through, absolutely no problem.

Mark: They use that kind of equipment interface like Final Cut Pro that is used in industry?

Dario: Final Cut or Avid in industry – it just depends where you go. Avid was the first and broadcasters use it. Both the STV and BBC Scotland use Avid. In terms of new purchases, there are more that are Final Cut with small production facilities, some papers... they are running with Final Cut. What we are teaching in the time we've got is the principals of the editing sequences and therefore, if you can operate one non-linear editing package, you get the broad principals of time line based interface for capturing video.

Mark: You said that you are marketing at a national level and you get enquiries from all over. Are you still hosting it at Cardonald College and people come here or are you getting out of the College?

Dario: We are getting out and about. We're sometimes hosting at Cardonald, but at the same time even the Glasgow courses we are sometimes hosting part of that course elsewhere because the key thing is that we are looking to find stories that students can do video based features about. So we've worked with Trongate 103, Glasgow Media Access Centre. We've hired the facilities because they're close to the town and therefore we can send our students out to make little features, basically, because the most important thing is that they no longer see it as something foreign or alien to them. They see it as an extension of their own skills in putting this story together with a visual and audio element to it.

Mark: And do they get a chance to upload and show case their work?

Dario: Yes, there is an NUJ YouTube channel where there's some stuff up there – kind of the best that's been put together is up there. They also get a DVD of

everybody's work so they can see how they've done and how the other people have done.

Mark: What do you think was the main barrier of piecing it altogether? Was it finding the capital for the equipment purchase or was it just the initial spark of an idea or something?

Dario: I think the fact that the college invested was great because it means we're not trying to use college kit – we've got kit specifically for training and that is a massive help. You are always pushed for resources in a college, particularly if you are teaching a practical subject. The fact that we've got ring-fenced kit makes it much easier.

Often what we have to get over is that sometimes the people who are on the course feel that they have to know something about this stuff because they sense that they are not getting as much work as they were previously getting. They sense that if they can't say, "Yes, I can do a video element" then potentially they are not going to get a job. So sometimes when they are on the course they are there because they feel they *have* to be there, out of fear as opposed to a burning enthusiasm when they come. The way we structure the course in terms of the exercise they do. The initial focus is to put them at their ease in terms of if a camera that has different buttons on it the principal fear is "what button do I press?" "Am I going to break it if I press that button?" "Am I going to lose all my material?" – all that kind of thing. It's getting them to know that the technology is working for them. So it is intense but we take them through it a step at a time.

Mark: So the equipment you have then is dedicated and you don't have to compete with other courses in the college.

Dario: No and that's made a massive difference.

Mark: That's the key then?

Dario: That, and the professional expertise of the tutors.

Theresa: So, you were saying when the course originally started, they guys behind the camera were the cameramen – do you find now that it is merging and people are pushing themselves out of their comfort zone now?

Dario: Having had that initial experience, we kind of make sure that it happens. It's like any course. If you've got 8 people in front of you, then some of them will always step up and some of them will sit back. It's making sure they all get hands on. Once they do, they tend to get very enthusiastic and it's quite difficult to get them back off again. But it is people taking that initial step and the as I said, the feedback we've had has been absolutely great. Really, really good and a number of them have gone on to continue to be using video to be getting jobs involved using video and its helping them in their careers, basically.

Mark: How do you see the future? Would you like to see the course scaled up in anyway?

Dario: I think it potentially goes in both directions. I think the fact that we are teaching principals of how to put together video based stories means that we could teach this at a simpler level. We want to run an introductory version which potentially means that, if we're talking about principals, it can be what you are shooting off your iPhone or whatever, because the principals remains the same. So I think we can do introductory level and I think potentially we can go at a higher level beyond the more advanced course that we do. I think we could do something beyond that again for those who are then in and using it regularly they naturally then generate more questions, more demands and so we would hope to have both. If we are talking about Level 1 and Level 2 at the moment, we would hope to develop with a Level 3 and an Introductory Level, which could be one day or two days. Just depending on what people need really, to be honest, and how they can fund themselves. There is plenty to be learned from an introductory as well as from a higher-level course that deals with more in terms of video Codex and stuff like that.



Kathleen Morgan

Kathleen: I think also that the industry is developing and as the industry develops and changes and there are more demands for journalists to be converged; to be able to turn their hand to anything, I think the course that can reflect that as it goes along. I am from a print background, I came from the Herald and Times and there is

an expectation that you will up skill. Herald and Times will give you a bit of training but a lot of journalists are now looking elsewhere to try and make sure that they are fully armed for the converged media landscape.

Theresa: Because journalists are no longer just print.

Kathleen: No, that's right. You are expected to be an all rounder.

Theresa: You are expected to be able to Blog on it, Tweet, if possible take photographs.... Supply the whole lot. The role has changed.

Kathleen: That's right. There is a tension within in the industry because newspapers don't have a lot of money just now and while they want their staff to be skilled, they don't necessarily have all the funding to train them. So, that's where a course like this is ideal. Sometimes it will be journalists pursuing training off their own bats – the course is advertised through the NUJ - and they will not necessarily even go public on it. They will just want to do a course like this so that they know that they are ready for whatever is thrown at them.

Theresa: And is the cost to the actual students on the course? Is it completely covered for them?

Dario: For the NUJ students, the course has been covered by the STUC Learning Fund to date. For other versions of the course, Skills Development Scotland Flexible 5000 Fund would pay 50% of the costs. The Skillset Multi-platform Fund would pay up to 80% of costs. It is potentially at what would be full cost because it is both a labour intensive and a capital-intensive course. It is an expensive course so therefore packages of funding that support people to come on it are what will help to generate momentum. I also think that potentially we will be talking alongside the NUJ, with employers about packages of training potentially to support them and their workforce.

Theresa: You mentioned the Individual Learning Accounts – do you see that as being an Evening Class?

Dario: Again, there's some journalism courses which don't necessarily go into the video side of things much. I think that potentially we could help to take (that part of the course) particularly at a time when money is tight for people. Rather than a whole bunch of institutions trying to invest in kit, possibly in an area they are not comfortable with, we can offer packages that can be ILA supported, to groups of students. We've got the flexibility to do that, either on an evening basis... the ideal as far as I'm concerned is to try and do it intensively rather than trying to learn a camera week on week or editing week on week. That's what we do in college because it's a normal college structure. They get much more time to do that, the students we've got in college. At the same time, if you are a working professional and you want to learn a new skill, if you are able to do it, if that time can be blocked intensively, and then you are able to build on your learning, to my mind that is the

best way to do it. Because we've got the kit, because we've got the trainers, we can cut the cake the way it suits, wherever the customer is actually and that's a big help.

Theresa: How many on your team are able to actually deliver this course? Are you working flat out Dario?

Dario: I AM working flat out! At the moment we've got 4 people involved in delivering. We've probably got a group of about 6 who can help. What helps with the journalists is working side by side. I still practice as a practitioner in television when I can. The other principal trainer is called Mike Higgins and he's still a working broadcast journalist at the BBC but he is also an NUJ trainer. So that combination, I think works well. I think it even works well in perception terms of when people come in the door, that this is someone who comes from a journalist background, which I don't, but that this is someone who comes from a production and technical background, which I do. That combination is what works best.

Theresa: It's the Dream Team!

Dario: Well, kind of! And that does make it – that is the thing. It's two people. It's a really low trainer to student ratio.... but again it is undoubtedly for me part of what the success is.

Theresa: Are you going to get the course accredited?

Dario: I think it would make sense to get accreditation. What do people want? When they come to train in the first instance, they want the technical skills. However, it's a freelance world. If they can get something.... I don't think they are thinking about an accredited qualification in the first place. However, if they can get something that they can carry around with them that says "I have achieved this to this level" .... The business is only going to be freelance. There is never going to be some huge influx of permanent staff jobs. From now on it's going to be a freelance world and if people have got something that is a benchmark and is recognized, then it is a useful thing. I think its something we should be looking at.

Theresa: So who would you go to for attaining accreditation for the course? Any thoughts?

Dario: I think there are potentially two areas. Skillset as our sector skills council and could do something with regard to accreditation. I also think that if we can get SCQF accredited or validated, I think that is potentially the route to go down as well. If people can actually gain some SCQF points as they go. To be honest I think that the learning should be down from such a way that from introductory course through to advanced level course; we should be able to do that. But as I am pushed so far out at the moment, it's not something we've have done! I think we really need to do it as an institution or as a partnership with the NUJ.

Theresa: Is there anything you would like to add to that Kathleen?

Kathleen: Cardonald College is accredited by the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ). It is helpful when you are recognised by the industry as being of a certain quality, so I think it's a good idea. It rubber stamps what you are doing already, which is fantastic. It just helps give a little something extra for the client, I suppose. They like to know that the industry will recognise what they've done.

Theresa: People like to have a logo or accreditation on their CV to show they have made that extra effort

Kathleen: Yes, you can have a badge or whatever, but it's just being able to get out there, find stories and deliver them to whatever platform you are asked to deliver them to. That is what Dario and Mike have been training people to do. That is primarily what people are after for this course.

Theresa: So if I wanted to do this course, what would be my first step? Who would I contact and how would I go about signing up for the course?

Dario: Well, there are different routes in. For NUJ members, they would go through their union. For people making a fresh enquiry who are not NUJ members, the course is outlined on the College's Training Solutions pages – Training Solutions being the training arm of the College. We need a critical mass, so we need to have a certain number of people to be able to run the course. Periodically we put out calls for interested people and we set a date. We can come and go with that date potentially, but we can't run it with one or two people. There needs to be a certain number of people before it is actually viable to run the course.

Theresa: But if I was interested in doing the course after reading this case study, I could contact the College and possibly go on to a waiting list?

Dario: Yes.

Theresa: OK, well that sounds very interesting. That's all we have time for - thank you very much for your time today.

Dario: OK

Kathleen: Thank you.