Teaching with Replay: Lecture capture in the History of Art Department

Automated lecture capture is an evolving technology that allows students to review online what they have learnt in the lecture theatre or classroom and provides an archive of recordings for revision in preparation for exams. Access to the recordings is via a suitably configured WebLearn site. Lecture capture is the service most requested in surveys of Oxford students. The Educational Media Services Team in Academic IT Services conducted two projects to explore the potential for lecture capture at Oxford during 2014 and 2015. The lessons learned have informed the development of a service, known as Replay, available from August 2016. In this case study staff from the Department of the History of Art share the benefits of lecture capture experienced through participation in the projects.

Using Replay to complete the picture

Audio-visual provision is central to teaching in the Department of the History of Art. It is essential that the spoken words and images used in lectures interact successfully with one another to aid students' understanding of visual culture. Previously, lecture recordings were only made available on departmental computers and access had to be requested in advance. This meant students often struggled to pair the audio commentaries with the corresponding PowerPoint slides.

The pilot of the Replay lecture capture software during 2014 and 2015 presented an ideal opportunity to improve the Department's teaching and learning provision outside the classroom. In particular, it helped students with learning difficulties or those unable to attend lectures due to extenuating circumstances, as Replay supports a more flexible mode of learning on which these students rely.

A portrait of the process

In preparation for using Replay, two teaching rooms in the Department were set up with remote recording equipment, and administrative staff were trained to schedule, manage, and edit the recordings from desktop computers.

During 2014 the Department recorded one lecture series, *Prelim Antiquity after Antiquity*. The recordings were made available to students via links in their WebLearn course sites.
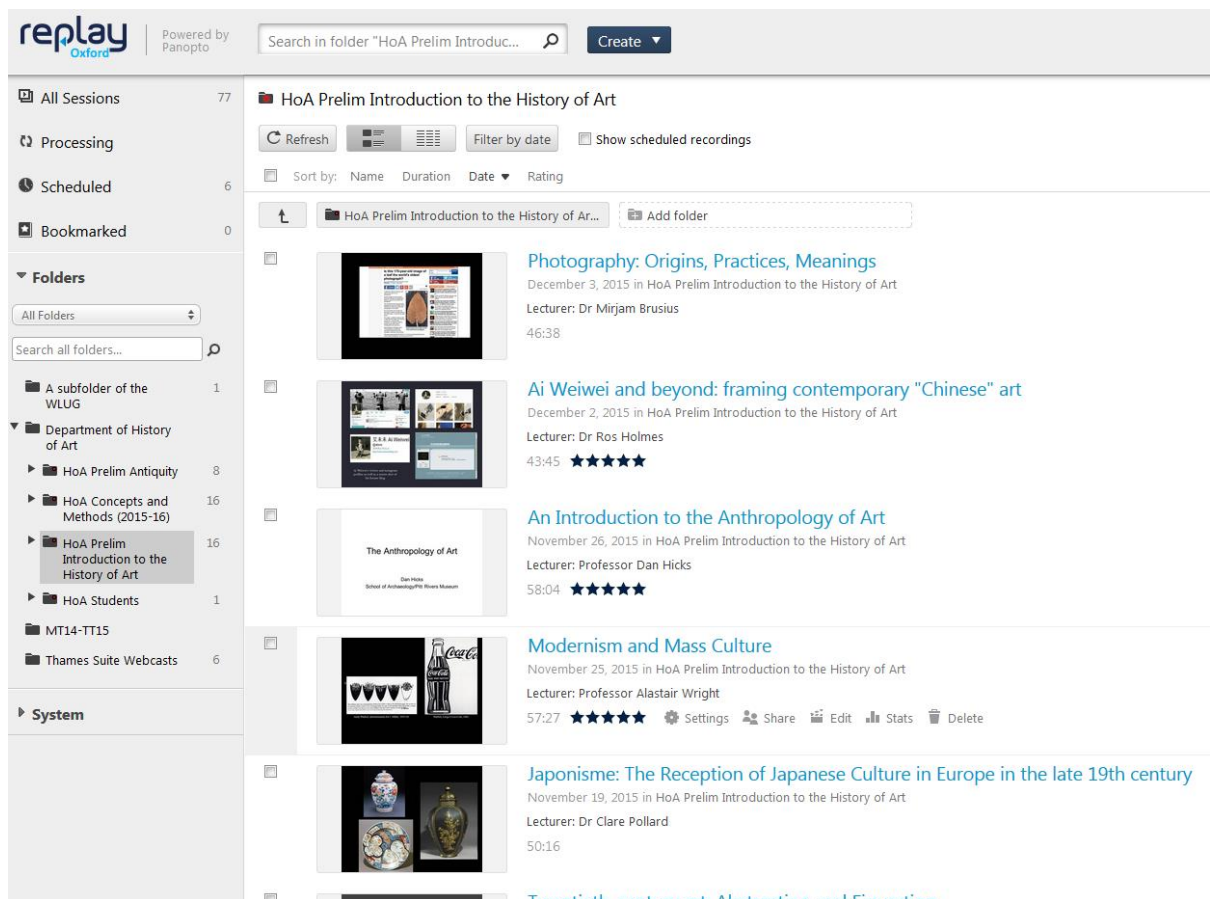
Figure 1 A screenshot of the Prelim Introduction to the History of Art series in Replay

Although its primary function is to allow students to listen back to lectures, Replay can also be used more interactively. Each student has their own profile, and can search within a recording for keywords. They can bookmark certain sections and slides, and make time-specific notes which, when saved, will reappear each time the student opens the recording. These additional features are particularly useful for when students come to draw upon these materials as part of their revision.

Figure 2 Search results for the word 'national' in one of the Prelim Antiquity after Antiquity lectures showing the time within the recording where each one occurs

Figure 3 Using the 'Notes' feature in Replay to annotate one of the Department's Careers Seminars

An image of success

Replay's simple audio-visual interface has successfully solved the students' previous problem of matching words to images. A Second Year undergraduate said that they "found the online recordings of lectures in sync with the pictures […] really helpful". Students have reported that the lecture recordings offer an invaluable resource which help to consolidate their learning away from lectures: "[they are] good as an aural learning device as well as jogging my memory on the significance of certain images" (First Year undergraduate student). Feedback confirms that the recordings have not replaced live lectures; rather, they complement them. Students who are unable to attend a live lecture for reasons beyond their control appreciate the ability to catch up, thanks to the recording. Additionally, everything was set up in advance for the lecturers which meant they were not required to do anything beyond deliver their talk. This alleviated concerns that lecture capture might be intrusive and distracting, and the result was a strongly positive attitude in the Department towards using the Replay technology.

Following these highly encouraging findings, the department now records two more core lecture series: *Prelim Introduction to the History of Art* and *FHS/MSt Concepts and Methods* (open to undergraduates, graduates and other University members), as well as three optional courses.

The use of Replay has contributed to the Department's wider outreach and research goals as staff have released a number of recordings on iTunes U. They have also recorded careers seminars and research papers, both for general release and for departmental records.

Recommendations for adopting lecture capture

Rachel Leach and her colleagues in the Department of the History of Art offer the following suggestions to other departments that might be considering recording their lectures:

- Consider investing in a lapel microphone. This will improve the quality of recordings and allow the speaker to roam around the room.
- If a lecture theatre doesn't have enough capacity, use Replay to live-stream the presentation to an overflow room.
- Explore ways in which Replay can help foster inter-departmental collaboration. The Department suggests that 'there is a huge interdisciplinary benefit across the University if more departments and faculties decide to opt in to Replay. [In a survey] 65% of our students said that they would listen to recorded lectures from other courses.'

Further information

- You can view the full list of openly available History of Art lectures on the Department's iTunes U profile.

- The University-wide Replay lecture capture service was introduced in August 2016. To find out more, visit the [Replay web pages](#).
- For another example of how recorded lectures and videos have been used effectively with students, see the '[Flipping the mathematics classroom](#)' case study.