



Putting King's Online podcast

Episode 5: Diversity & Inclusion at OPEE

Putting King's Online, a podcast exploring the process of designing online learning courses from the team which creates them.

I'm your host Rachele Wall and in each episode of Putting King's Online, I'll be talking to my colleagues about their roles here at King's College London, within the Online and Professional Executive Education team. We'll be delving into the processes of creating online courses. From ideation to delivery, inclusive design, accessibility and where we stand in the wider online learning community.

Rachele

Today's guest in the hot seat is part of the King's Online media team, who shares a similar job title and slightly similar role to mine, but on the video side. Joining me today to discuss all things to do with video editing is George, great to have you on the podcast, George.

George

Thanks Rachele. Thanks for having me on.

Rachele

Can you describe what a Video Editor does in our team. What are your day-to-day tasks? What does a typical week look like for you?

George

Absolutely. As you mentioned, we as editors are an integral part of the media team and as our job role would suggest, we focus primarily on the post-production aspects of all the content that is produced. That's everything from ingesting footage to compiling the clips together to make the edit, and then everything of what we like to call the online edit, which includes stuff like motion graphics, colour grading, audio work and branding. That's primarily our day-to-day as well, focusing just on the editing aspect.

But back in the good old days, pre COVID when you could actually film, myself and Fernando, the other editor, we would alternate helping out on shoots. That would be both on location and in the studio. That could be everything from with a set-up, with

the lighting, audio connectivity, and then making notes as well on each take to help us when it comes to the actual editing itself.

Rachele

Some very technical things that you mentioned there that I'm not sure everybody would a 100 percent know. When you talk about things like colour grading and stuff like that, what does that actually entail?

George

Yes, I do realise it's very specialised. When you talk about stuff like colour grading, for those who may be familiar with photography or Instagram is also a good example for colour, is pretty much trying to alternate and improve the quality of the image. That's done by changing the contrast, the exposure of the image and just trying to bring it to life essentially, because when we film in any capacity obviously the raw footage is just the most plain example of what we actually create. In order to be able to enhance that, we try and use a variety of software to just pretty much enhance the image to make it more of a finalised project.

Rachele

Really making a pop, I guess.

George

Yeah, exactly. Like I mentioned with the other online editing aspects, the graphics as well, these are all additional sides to editing. Which like you said, in terms of making it pop, exactly it's trying to make it interesting and engaging for the audience as possible.

Rachele

I guess for anybody outside of the team or for anyone unfamiliar with the components of online courses. I guess many people would think about the Video Editor job title as something that they would see in film credits, for example, if and how does your role at King's Online and in OPEE differ in the context of online learning versus those more traditional video production settings that most people would know of?

George

From a personal perspective, it's very much an ambition of mine to be involved in film and TV industry going forward. I'd certainly like to think there are similarities. [LAUGHTER] But definitely the more obvious similarities should probably be the software that we use. Working with King's, we are given the Adobe package to work with. That's everything. That's Premier, Photoshop, Audition, pretty much focusing on a variety of different things when it comes to editing both the image and the audio like I mentioned. You'll often find that is very much industry standard in film, especially now.

Other aspects that are similar, would probably be the relationship that we have as editors with other members of the team, primarily the Video Producers or directors because it's very much a back and forth between the two of us and/or whoever it is in the team, because it's a whole load of ideas coming together. You have to be

prepared as an editor to work towards other people's expectations as much as your own.

In terms of differences like you mentioned, the most obvious one would probably be the content. At the end of the day, we are making educational videos and our target audience is students. As much as we have to engage them visually and making sure that there are no distractions, nothing jarring with the actual video itself, we have to make sure that it's as clear as possible and the message that's being put across is going to be adhered to by the students and they're going to thrive upon what we actually create. That's something that, as far as differences go, that's probably one that you have to be mindful of as an editor because you can get carried away. You can think, what if I have an image or text scrolling through it at this point, you got to be careful that you don't distract from what is being said or what is being taught. Definitely content is the difference.

Then I suppose ultimately, more specifically as an editor, we are a team within a team. You don't often find many post houses or production teams that are as immediately connected to another team as much as we are. Obviously, we are working with a variety of different people within OPEE. It's fantastic for us because it enables us to get a really broad sense of what it is we're creating. But that's certainly not, from what I've experienced, certainly not the most standardised aspects of this industry.

Rachele

Just picking up on what you were saying about the teamwork aspect and being a team within a team, I guess I'm just wondering, how much do you think that this role in the type of work that we produce has changed in the amount of time that you've been with King's Online or OPEE?

George

Massively, a huge difference. I've been working with King's now for just nearly best part five years. In that time, we have grown not just in a more literal sense, in terms of numbers of employees, and to our environment we've really pushed as a media team to have a more professional setup that suits our way of working. That was obviously came into fruition at the start of 2020 when we were able to have a purpose-built studio and editing suites in a new area that King's already owned. When you compare that to where we were when I first started and it went from being an office environment to studio environment and that is a huge step up really.

I think it's no surprise that the quality of work has gone along with the transition. When you have a new setup like that, I think attitudes automatically change as well. You're already going to have quite a positive team ethos, but that's certainly can be enhanced when you can have an environment that people can thrive in. In terms of other aspects that have changed, I think people's job roles have been slightly more streamlined and therefore I think the workflow within those job roles has become more streamlined as well, creating a more clear outline for everyone. Yeah, absolutely a huge evolution of our team.

Rachele

I think I've definitely seen a lot of that change as well from when I first started taking over the audio to where it is now it's definitely a massive improvement. I think

what's really nice about the wider team, but also just the media team as it stands today is the fact that we are all specialists in our field, and everyone is so skilled and talented it's so hard to get that across how much attention to detail like really goes into even the smallest one-minute-long video clip. There's so much work that goes into that, it's a real testament to how much the team has grown over the years.

George

Yeah. That's certainly an aspect of when you're working either in audio like yourself, or just editing in general, you do find that the skillset gets more, broadened is probably the best way of putting it because, when I first started, it was very much a case of just receiving footage, just churning it out, and then putting it on a platform for students. Now, you find that naturally, expectations change because we realised that we can push things further because of the equipment that we own. Pretty much just the challenges that we set for ourselves as well. We really do try and push to make sure that we are constantly improving each year and I think that is what sets us aside as an online team, because we have so many specialised employees now, looking at not just us as a team, but in the wider sense as well when you have the ELVDs as well when it comes to graphics. The collaboration that we're now really pushing for as well is also making sure that our videos are hitting new levels each time as well.

Yeah, you're absolutely right. It is specialised and certainly when you're filming someone externally you're absolutely right. It does take a little bit of a discussion for them to realise exactly what it is we're trying to achieve. But that's all part of the process of filming and that's certainly something that we as a team are thriving on as well.

Rachele

Just thinking about something that you said earlier about colour grading and comparing that to Instagram. How important is video content in online learning? When you think about how much video content people are used to absorbing in their day-to-day lives. Not only in the film and TV programs that they watch, but on social media platforms. Do you think that there is that much more of an expectation for that type of quality that we're now pushing towards producing?

George

Yeah, certainly. I think when you look at the stats of how many people are viewing content on their phones as well, a lot of things are on the go. You have to make sure that you are being in the mindset of the students or whoever it is that's watching the videos, you have to make sure the content matches their expectations as well. I think you're absolutely right, across the board now, video content is vitally important. Obviously, we're in a situation currently where I don't think you could have more of a clamor for videos because people are subjected to just being able to view things online. Again, that's a very good point. That's something that we as a team, we don't really take for granted how important our role has become within Kings.

I think in terms of the university setup as well, we're trying to make sure that we set ourselves apart from other uni's and trying to be as innovative and unique as possible with what we create. I think that is certainly appreciated by students and lecturers alike. I think in terms of us prioritising high-quality content above

everything else, I think that is really starting to resonate with the audience, so to speak.

Rachele

We've talked a lot in previous episodes about the importance of the UX research that we've done with our students and really trying to understand the type of content that they really enjoy, I guess, from a learning perspective. In terms of reducing cognitive load, video and media elements really helped to cut through purely text-based learning. There's a lot to be said for something that looks pretty and is really pleasing on the eye, but it is vitally important and very functional as well.

George

Yeah, certainly, and I think being a student myself, I certainly appreciated having the ability of actually having something I could watch back to and just dissecting something that isn't just simply having to highlight words in a book, [LAUGHTER] which, it is one of those things where different students will adapt to different ways of learning. But I think because we've now created a high level of work on our platform, I think it's certainly encouraged students to partake in their studies a little bit more. They are able to view stuff back. They don't actually have to be in the lectures and writing down notes every single time. They can actually go back to something that's been pre-recorded and they can appreciate that as a separate thing as well.

Rachele

Yeah, definitely having that ability to have a bit more control over your environment and your timeline is so important. I just wanted to talk a little bit about your background. How did you end up working in an online learning environment?

George

Yes, of course. From a personal perspective, I can probably track my interest in the field at the end of school time when I was tasked with making a music video with one of my best mates, and that gave me exposure to all aspects of production. It just so happened that for me, editing was the most satisfying and more fulfilling part of the job. Then so from there, I decided to study editing and post-production at Ravensbourne University, which is as specialised as it sounds. Yeah. Again, did work experience for a number of companies, BT Sports, The Look, which is a colour grading company. Pretty much just getting as much exposure as soon as possible and trying to learn the field as well as I can.

Then within about two or three months after finishing university, I was asked by King's Online if I would be interested in being an editor for them on a temporary basis. At the age that I was at, being asked to be an editor straight away was something I just simply had to accept. I suppose it's quite rare to go into editing so soon after studying and I just loved the idea that I'd have that responsibility straightaway. Then like you said, being in an online environment, you soon realise that you're not just working with people within your industry, you're working across a huge variety of people, a real diverse setup as a team, and again, that was something I just loved. I just really liked the idea that my first proper role as an editor was going to be working with the whole team. Yeah, as I mentioned earlier, it was a temporary at first, but within a year, I became full-time, and in that time, the team

has gone such a long way. It's been a real positive start for me in my career. That has to be said.

Rachele

Yeah, I think that's definitely one of the stranger things that have happened to people, is getting something straight out of uni, especially in any media production roles like this. It is almost unheard of, isn't it really?

George

Yeah. I think at first, it was quite a daunting prospect and all of a sudden, there was only me, one other editor, and then I think there was only two video producers at the time. We were a team of four. Naturally, the amount of work that was coming through, when I first started, it was a bit of all hands-on deck setup, which was a little overwhelming. But I suppose that's something within this industry, is that you are constantly being challenged anyway. You do find yourself really thriving and learning new aspects of the role, and really improving your skill set as well.

Yeah, you're right. It is rare. I think being a runner is certainly the slightly more familiar route. You go from a runner, and then it's an assistant. Then you're looking at being an editor from there. It's very much a ladder, hierarchy setup, which is something I did experience once I was doing those jobs, like I said when I was at uni. I have to say the idea being an editor straightaway and avoiding making teas and coffees was, yeah, like I said, something I just had to jump into. But I think in terms of yourself as an audio editor as well, I think it is a bit daunting to be the one responsible for that work. But I think it's fair to say that it's something that we all definitely pride ourselves on as well.

Rachele

What advice do you think you would give someone who is interested, perhaps a school leaver or someone who's just studied, transitioning into media production, but in an online learning environment?

George

Well, first of all, I think being as open-minded as possible helps, so absolutely keeping every door open. Even if you are an editor or you're focusing on audio or you're a colour grader or whatever, the idea of exposing yourselves to the actual shoots themselves and both in terms of studio or location and just being really open to learn as well. There's absolutely no end to how much you can take from this industry, and in terms of turning it into more specific with online as well.

Again, it's just making sure you're flexible to other people's way of working. We do have a set workflow as a team, because that's really important for us to be able to take on projects that we weren't necessarily assigned to. So just pretty much being as flexible as possible in terms of approaching the work and approaching the team ethos as well. Try to make sure that you listen as much as possible as well.

Don't be stubborn, [LAUGHTER] which I can be. I think ultimately it can be a very tense environment when there's a lot of deadlines coming up. But ultimately, the team lends itself to being a very enjoyable setup as well. I would massively recommend being involved within this team to the maximum, really.

Rachele

It's a very inclusive environment. Obviously, we all have our specialties and we all have our areas in our little teams within our teams, but I think the nature of the way that we work so collaboratively altogether, you just end up picking up on elements of what every other person's role is and how all of those different parts come together to create that final product. To me, I think it's quite rare. I haven't really experienced that in other roles that I've been in.

George

I think because we now have a setup within the media team where we have two video producers, a senior video producer, a media manager. Fernando our other editor, who's got that bit more experience than me, so he's very much focused on colour grading. Before you know it, you are totally learning off some of the best in their field. That's something that certainly I take inspiration from. It's really pushed me to try and take my personal work to the next level as well and try and match the expectations of the rest of the team. As you mentioned yourself being so heavily involved in audio, we've now got ourselves a team where we can really focus on virtually every aspect of production.

That's certainly something on an individual basis that I really thrive upon as well. You're absolutely right. It is certainly one of those things whereas a team we have grown so much now. We've also tried to make sure that the rest of OPEE are slightly more familiar with our work as well, and that's something that we're continuing to do, making sure that the collaboration sticks as well. It's certainly an environment that I have really got a huge amount of pride in being involved with.

Rachele

We all work on some interesting topics. [LAUGHTER] I guess I was wondering if there's any projects that you've worked on where there's been something unique or interesting about that, that's really stood out to you or any weird and wonderful facts that has just stuck with you.

George

That's a good question. In terms of the amount of effort that the whole team put into it, and it turns out I didn't really do much editing with this project, but the Forensics MOOC has to be one of the standouts, [LAUGHTER] simply because we were spending the early hours of the morning on a so-called beach near Canary Wharf. That was pretty much us really trying to experiment with different genres, at the time that we were looking at working with actors and creating scenarios that would again take our work to the next level. I just remember that being a mammoth of a project.

Georg, the Video Producer, who was leading that was an absolute hero. I have no idea how we managed to cobble it all together. But that was very much a team effort. We even had people from the wider parts of King's Online being involved in that. So that was huge.

In terms of more editing, there's been so many. I think in terms of one where I remember myself and Dan, the Senior Video Producer, we were involved in was Global Finance and Banking (MSc) work, which does sound quite, I think the most polite way probably saying it's quite dry. The content isn't that experimental. Between the two of us, we had to find a way of making sure that the students were

going to be engaged as possible. That's when both of us decided that we're going to look at using what's called kinetic typography, which is a really fancy way of saying, making words come onto a screen. That was a real process. Again, I was new to, but I really thrived on.

Those are the two that stick out straight away, but there have been so many and for such a variety of reasons. I think, again, the content that keeps coming through does lend itself to us trying new ways of working. So I can only assume in the next few months and however long, I'll be able to give you a new answer to that question.

Rachele

Awesome. I think I remember the Forensics MOOC in the production phases. I think I just started at King's Online and I remember it being this massive military operation where people were being grabbed out of the office every couple of hours to film something or to stand in this place to do some things. I've never seen it, but I remember it being quite a big deal.

George

Yeah. [LAUGHTER] It was one of those things, because I don't live in London, so all of a sudden I was asked if I could get to Canary Wharf something like half six or seven in the morning because we had to match the start time of our shoot to when the shore had disappeared and we were able to actually film on the beach once the tide had actually disappeared. You end up getting yourself up at about half four or five in the morning, just bracing yourself for this massive, like you said, almost military-style shoots. [LAUGHTER] The outcome was exactly what we wanted. It's certainly a huge go-to for us to show SMEs, clients, the wider team. We've got a couple of showreels now and loads of those clips make it into it. It's just a testament to perseverance and hard work really. You're absolutely right. We did have to try and cobble as many of the King's Online team to get involved as possible. It's a bit crazy to think that's nearly three years ago now, but it certainly made us realise just how far we could take our work as a team, I think.

Rachele

Well, thank you so much for having a chat with me today.

George

Thank you, Rachele. It's a pleasure being involved.

Rachele

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