

[P39] As seen on TV: using video clips in science teaching

Chris Willmott

Department of Biochemistry, University of Leicester, LE1 9HN
cjr2@le.ac.uk

Keywords: television, multimedia, copyright, TRILT

In the autumn of 2006, a UK publishing house sent an e-mail to academics pointing out that you can 'enrich your students' learning experience through the use of quality broadcast documentaries, dramas and current affairs programming'. The memo went on to advise that, for £195 per episode (falling to £125 per episode if 4 or more were ordered), they could provide copies of classic BBC programmes for lectures, tutorials and workshops.

As an enthusiastic user of TV footage in my teaching particularly, but not exclusively, in the field of bioethics, I thoroughly endorse the sentiment of the circulated message. Experience shows that broadcast material can, indeed, be a way to enliven lectures, to convey concepts and ideas that even the most animated of PowerPoint slides cannot achieve, and can serve as excellent discussion starters. Thanks, however, to the Educational Recording Agency (**ERA**) and the British Universities Film and Video Council (**BUFVC**) there is no need to pay such substantial fees for the right to use programmes. This short article is intended to offer practical advice on the more cost effective ways to obtain television programmes, both at the time of transmission and archived copies of previous broadcasts, and guidance on the legal use of available material.

Legal use of copyrighted material

The ERA licensing scheme permits use of TV and radio broadcasts for non-commercial, educational purposes. The Licence specifically covers programmes on the five terrestrial television services and their digital sister channels, including BBC3, BBC4, ITV2 and ITV3 and E4, plus the Welsh-language station S4C and BBC radio (ERA, 2005). Other satellite and digital TV stations are not presently included under any licensing scheme and Open University programmes are specifically *excluded* as they operate under separate arrangements.

The terms under which recorded material can be used are clearly defined. For example, any videotape, CD or DVD of programmes recorded via the ERA scheme must include: the date when the recording was made; the name of the broadcaster; the title of the programme; and the exact words 'This recording is to be used only for educational and non-commercial purposes under the terms of the ERA License'. The same four items must be included on the packaging case in which the recording is stored. It is permitted to change the format of the recording (e.g. to convert a clip from a DVD into a Windows Media file for embedding in a PowerPoint presentation) provided that the same acknowledgments are included and the programme is not materially altered, e.g. by replacing the original soundtrack with new dialogue (for full terms see ERA, 2005).

What's on and when?

With the legal position clarified, how can we know what has been/will be broadcast and how do we obtain copies of interesting programmes? It is here that the BUFVC (www.bufvc.ac.uk) really comes into its own and deserves to be better known by academics. Let's start with knowing what is available. At the risk of introducing yet another acronym, the pivotal service here is **TRILT**, the Television and Radio Index for Learning and Teaching (www.trilt.ac.uk). TRILT is provided to member organisations by BUFVC and works in two ways. Firstly, you can use TRILT to set up *weekly e-mail alerts* warning you of forthcoming programmes matching key words of your choice. Armed with this information you can ask your local audio-visual team to make a recording for you at the time of transmission or, indeed, to request a recording directly via the TRILT site. Secondly, you can search the TRILT database of transmission history covering millions of TV and radio programmes broadcast since 1995. All the search terms you would expect are there, so there should be no excuse for failing to track down the documentary or drama you seek.

Of course, this latter feature would be of little benefit without another aspect of BUFVC, namely *the off-air recording back-up service*. Failure to personally record a programme no longer leaves you sending forlorn e-mails to colleagues to see if they happened to have got it taped. Since June 1998, the BUFVC has routinely stored all programmes broadcast on BBC1, BBC2, ITV, C4, five and, since their launch, BBC3 and BBC4. Staff at member institutions (see www.bufvc.ac.uk/aboutus/memberlist.html) can request copies in a variety of formats and these are distributed via the authorised representative for the institution. Various numbers of free copies are included as part of the different categories of BUFVC membership, and it is therefore likely that you can obtain a copy of a broadcast you want for the price of materials plus any administrative fee levied by your university or college.

The combination of these various services now makes it a realistic proposition to set up databases recommending tried and tested programmes and/or clips to colleagues in other institutions. So, for example, we have exploited the growing ease of Web 2.0 technologies to establish bioethicsbytes.wordpress.com where multimedia resources on issues relating to ethical aspects of modern biology can be discussed. In principle it is even permissible, under the terms of the ERA Licence, to make available copies to other academics for the price of materials plus postage (provided that their place of work also has a Licence and the recipient adheres to the legislation concerning the labelling and permitted use of the recording. This is not, however, a route that we have chosen to travel at present).

One area in which TRILT cannot help is news footage since, *de facto*, reportage is not known in advance. Even here, however, the potential to use clips for teaching is increasing rapidly. The BBC are beginning to stream significant news stories on their website and, unlike streamed editions of other programmes, it is the current intention to sustain the availability of the news footage in perpetuity (use the 'search' feature on bbc.co.uk; the multimedia clips are listed on the right-hand side of the screen). In another development, Independent Television News have a searchable database itnsource.com where you can seek out not only ITV and Channel 4 news items, but also the complete Channel 4 and Granada TV catalogues. Having identified a clip in which you are interested you can either order it direct from itnsource or, of course, if it was broadcast after June 1998, from BUFVC. Finally, ITN, Reuters and the BUFVC have joined forces in the Newsfilm Online project which will make copies of significant news footage available on the web to any interested parties, free of charge. The date for the nomination of potential clips for the conversion

process has now passed, but there may be the opportunity for other material to be included at a later date if this initial project is considered a success (see newsfilm.bufvc.ac.uk for details).

References

ERA (2005) *A guide to recording broadcasts for educational use*. London, UK: Educational Recording Agency