

## **Virtual Audio Production Lab Established In FCAD Challenges the Traditional “Fixed Lab” concept.**

This year Ryerson’s Theater and Radio and Television Arts students will return to school and have access to a lab that is really unique, a shared Virtual Audio Production Lab. The concept, which was originated by the Faculty of Communications and Designs Shared Audio Committee, is unique at Ryerson and has solved a number of academic delivery challenges while significantly improving the production facilities for both Schools.

The goals in establishing the Virtual Audio Production Lab was twofold;

- i) to increase the audio production capability in the School of Radio and Television Arts to address curricular changes and the double cohort.
- ii) To provide foundation technology on which the Theatre School could add to capacity to the audio component of its curriculum and provide foundation audio recording and production equipment to meet growing curricular demand.

Citing a shortage of space on Campus to create a new lab, a creative approach was taken by the committee. Instead of adding seats in a traditional lab or building more “fixed” audio production spaces, FCAD’s Shared Audio Committee opted to purchase laptops and equip them with the appropriate audio technology to meet the academic and production criteria required by the schools.

The two year plan equips each school with fifteen audio production laptops which will be loaned to students for production needs as required. The two Schools have agreed that during the first four weeks of each Academic semester either School can ask that all of the laptops that make up the Virtual Lab be assembled in a common area for “mass training” purposes. Hence the “virtual” concept allows for flexibility allowing for mass technology/software training at the start of a semester and then frees up the technology for the rest of the semester for use in the field. The concept saves the University valuable space along with the overhead costs of keeping the computers in a fixed location.

The laptops are equipped with Nuendo and Vegas software that meets a variety of basic audio production needs relevant to both schools. The software is the same that is in use in all in-house fixed audio facilities allowing students to move materials created on the laptops amongst a variety of facilities that exist at Ryerson. The common software platform means the laptops software can take advantage of in-house curricular training, technical expertise and operational support.

Each laptop is equipped with wireless networking, comes with the ability to burn CD’s and DVD’s, has firewire and USB connections to interconnect student owned storage and is equipped with an external M-Audio interface that allows for professional XLR audio interfaces that meet professional production standards.

To allay concerns about the durability of the laptops computers that were purchased, Panasonic provides a 3 year warranty that includes parts coverage and a 48 hour repair turnaround should they require a repair. This kind of warranty coverage does not stretch existing IT staff as in the case of a hardware failure the staff needs only to courier the laptop to Panasonic with the understanding that it will be returned repaired within 48 hours.

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