

# AUDIO FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION AND OPEN LEARNING

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PLANNERS  
AND PRODUCERS

John Thomas

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A practical guide for planners and producers

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JHT  
Songkhla, Thailand  
April 2000

# INTRODUCTION

## What is the purpose of this handbook?

The purpose of this handbook is to offer a practical guide to good professional practice in the design, development and delivery of audio materials – radio, audio cassettes and audio-vision – for distance and open learning.

## Who is the handbook intended for?

The handbook is intended for all those who are involved in the design, development, production and use of audio materials in distance education and open learning. It will be of particular interest to teaching staff and radio/audio producers who are using – or planning to use – audio as part of their courses.

However, the handbook will also be of interest and value to others who are involved in or affected by the use of audio in distance and open learning – for instance, policy makers and planners, managers and administrators, those working on related media (e.g. print, TV and video), face-to-face tutors and facilitators.

The handbook is relevant to both formal and non-formal education. It should also be of value to those involved in professional and vocational training. The approach adopted is appropriate to both industrialised and developing countries. However, an attempt has been made to make the handbook particularly relevant to those working in institutions and projects with limited access to resources.

## What does the handbook cover?

The handbook consists of nine chapters, with a brief appendix at the end suggesting further sources of information and advice.

- Chapter 1 looks at the different forms of audio and their potential for distance and open learning.
- Chapter 2 discusses the planning and design of audio materials – at the institutional or project level, at the level of particular courses, and at the individual programme level.
- Chapter 3 takes a step-by-step look at the process of developing and producing audio materials and printed support.

- Chapter 4 is the first of four chapters on the practical skills needed for audio. It deals with scripted talks, interviews and discussions.
- Chapter 5 goes on to location recording, the use of portable equipment, how to edit audio material and prepare it for use in the studio.
- Chapter 6 develops and extends the above skills, applying them to the compilation and production of documentaries, features and magazine programmes.
- Chapter 7 concludes the section on practical skills with a look at the techniques of audio drama and the use of music in distance and open learning.
- Chapter 8 looks at the ways students can use audio materials – both individually and in groups – and the support that can be offered to students and their tutors.
- Chapter 9 discusses the monitoring and evaluation of audio materials and ways in which their quality and effectiveness can be improved.

The handbook concludes with some suggestions on sources of further information and advice on the creation and use of audio materials for distance and open learning.

## **How can the manual be used?**

The handbook can be used in several different ways:

- It can be used by individuals as a basic self-instructional text on the planning, design, development, production and use of audio materials for distance and open learning.
- It can also be used within institutions and projects as resource material by groups of staff – ideally combining subject specialists and audio producers – who come together for training and professional development in the use of audio for distance learning.
- In addition, following individual or group-based use, the handbook can also serve as a source of reference material and guidelines on the range of activities and skills involved in using audio for distance education and open learning students.

Readers are encouraged to use the handbook in whatever way best suits their own personal and professional development needs. Any comments or observations on the text – and any suggestions for its improvement – would be welcomed by the author and publishers.