

Sharnbrook School, a comprehensive school located in Bedfordshire, about an hour and a half north of London, is known for a robust and advanced Media Arts Department where students can explore the creative and practical elements of all media, with a particular emphasis on film and television. The school's facilities include a substantial stock of digital video cameras and digital video edit suites, along with a variety of sound recording equipment, lighting and a purpose-built studio, all supported by a dedicated technical team and experienced teachers who are passionate about their subject.

Sharnbrook School is fairly unique in that, every week, the school's entire population sits down to watch a 20-minute live broadcast in lieu of a traditional "whole school" assembly. It's hosted by a Head of House (member of staff) and senior student, and features news about the events of that week, interviews, reports of school activity and acts as a means of communicating important information and messages to the school. The broadcast is crewed by a student team of volunteers under the supervision and guidance of the Media staff.

Given that the presenters are faculty members and students, rehearsal time is limited. Ensuring that correct information was being conveyed, whilst also trying to avoid the broadcast becoming a "teacher reading a bit of paper", the Sharnbrook staff started to look at whether it could make use of a teleprompter for segments of the broadcast.



Autocue's Starter Series Starter Series 17" teleprompter, complete with hardware and software, is ideal for schools and colleges.



According to Gareth Risdale, Sharnbrook's Senior Media Technician, "Autocue was the first name that came into our heads, and from our first phone call we received a really positive response. Within a few days we had a demo Starter Series prompter in the studio, and the difference it made was dramatic. It was clear straight away that this was a no-brainer purchase for us. Aside from the broadcast we also deliver a wide range of A-Level and BTEC media courses that cover studio operations, so this has also really benefited them. In short, the teleprompter was of enormous and immediate benefit - for our school community in general and for individual learners (and teachers) in particular."

The Autocue Answer



Another area that Sharnbrook wanted to look at technically was its videotape (VT) playback and recording methodology. This was still based on a pair of DVCAM VTRs, which, while functional, didn't provide the smoothest of workflows in terms of getting VTs from edit suite to play-out. Autocue approached Sharnbrook to demo a new two-channel server, which fitted the bill for Sharnbrook perfectly.

According to Risdale, "We gained the drag-n-drop workflow we were looking for - and some other unexpected benefits too - like seamless looping. The fact that we can switch channels from record to playback and instantly make use of recordings provides an instant slow-motion replay option, which we've already had some fun with. Our capital budget had an allowance for us to purchase a pair of new DVCAM decks which would have cost about twice the price of the two-channel server, so it was a timely cost saving for us as well."

Not only can they readily assemble live programming that includes pre-recorded content such as a report on recent sport events, academic awards or community notices, it can be recorded as it is being presented and packaged for subsequent availability on a web site or live show.

The Benefits

Risdale concludes, "It's not often that you can expand capabilities, save time AND save money, all in one go! We've been really happy with our Autocue equipment and are finding new uses for it all the time. We are not a university, but it's still our goal, as much as we can, to offer a media experience that is relevant to the industry that our students are heading towards. The fact that our students leave 6th Form having operated a teleprompter and a video server in a live broadcast environment has already surprised a few people."

For more information visit www.autocue.com

Autocue and QTV (in the Americas) have been serving the broadcast industry since the 1950s. They are the only company to offer the television industry a single solution for newsroom, scripting, automation, media management, video servers, broadcast monitors and teleprompters. Autocue is known worldwide for its service and dependability, serving such prestigious clients as the BBC, Bloomberg, NBC and CNN. Autocue's prompting solutions are compatible with all newsroom systems on the market and are used all over the world by broadcasters, production professionals, government facilities and corporate producers.

About Sharnbrook School

Sharnbrook School is a very successful 13-19 comprehensive school located in North Bedfordshire and is part of the Academy Federation of North Bedfordshire Schools. The school prides itself on high academic standards, good behaviour and excellent teaching, which has been recognised on many occasions by Ofsted.

Sharnbrook combines the advantages of a large school with extensive purpose-built facilities and in April 2011 was granted Academy Status. From April 2012 the school was designated as a National Teaching School in recognition of its high standards and commitment to professional development.

