

Podcasting 101

The sound of public engagement

With Marc Bragdon



Learning Outcomes

- Taking into account the *nature of audio* as a storytelling medium, the *properties of sound*, and your *audience's expectations*, prototype the intro to a podcast on **Finding meaning as a teacher.**
- Use a microphone and recording/editing software to best effect in *performing* your script
- Add and blend music and/or effects (sound design) into a recording project
- Edit and mix the audio to *optimize the listening experience* in recording/editing software
- Render the audio project as a sound file



Podcasting as oral storytelling

Digital Orality and Post-Literacy

“...so much is talk, so much is back-and-forthness, so much is information designed to be viral, memorable, repeatable”

What are the storytelling implications?

	READING	LISTENING
Working example	Article / Post	Podcast
Medium	Light	Sound
Navigation	Multi-directional	Linear
Performance	Solitary	Communal (broadcast)
Meaning	Words and visuals	Voice and sounds
Personal Mobility	Limited	Full

Make it personal

Science
AAAS

Podcast Episode

**Looking for life on an icy
moon, and feeling like a rat**

Science Magazine Podcast

- **Relate topics to your own experience**
- **Add cues for tone and pacing to your script**
- **Perform at 150% (unless you already do)**
- **Expect to perform *take after take after take***

Balancing concision and eloquence



Podcast

UNB in 30

Marc Bragdon

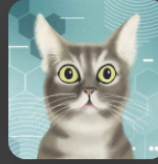
- Solo: Short, clear sentences
- Interviews / sound bites as conversations
 - *Be ruthless*: Minimize vocal distractions (um, erm, ah) / pauses / rambling / less engaging passages
 - Ask interview subjects to restate good answers that initially ramble to the point



Podcast Episode

Subtitles On: Why is movie dialogue so hard to understand?

Twenty Thousand Hertz



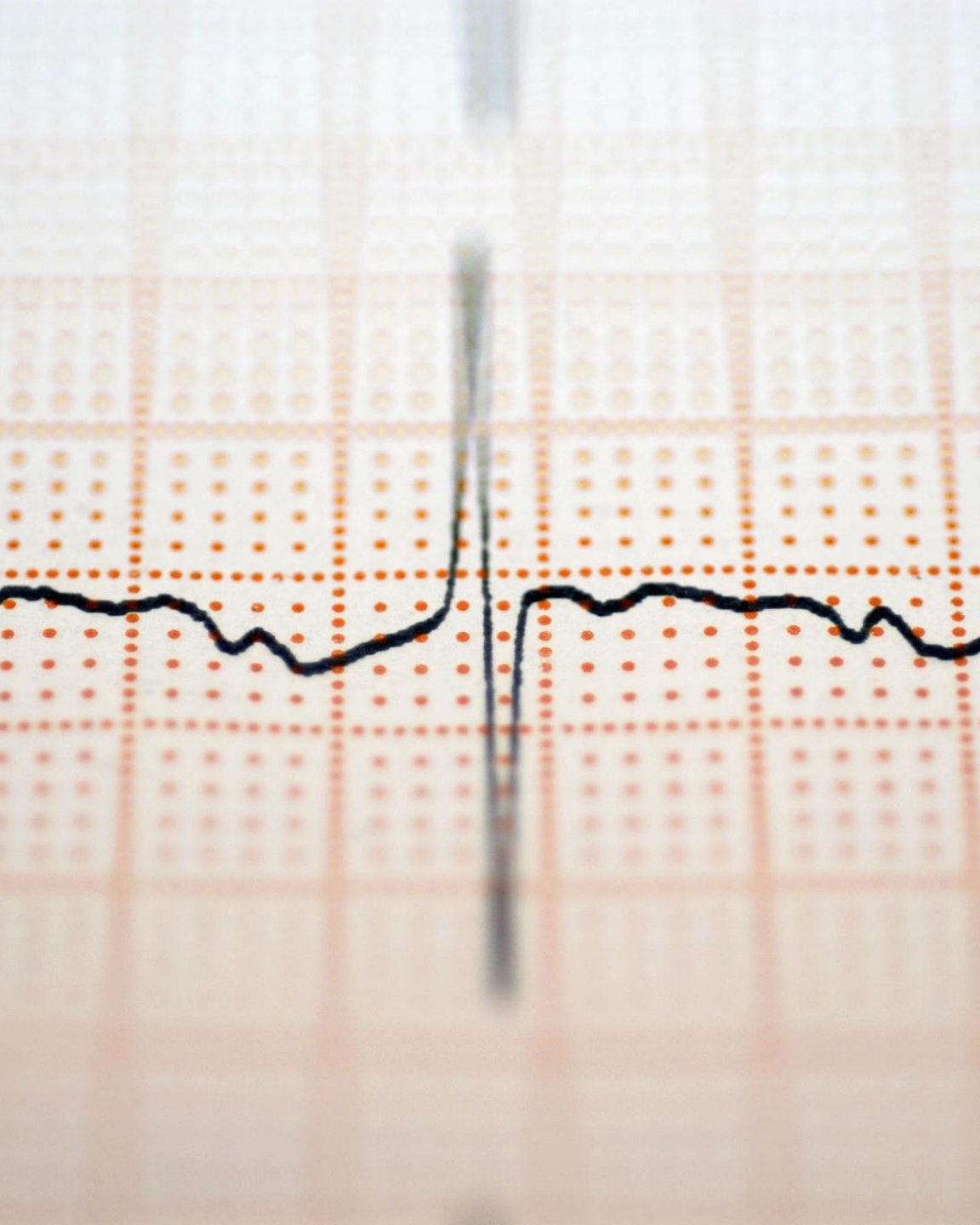
Cat Translation Guide

Episode • Twenty Thousand Hertz+

Control the flow

- Pause and set the stage; explicitly wrap up a section and introduce the next (“So...up to this point we’ve learned about the background of X, X’s motivations and X’s expectations, and next we’ll explore how X’s experience of Y has been shaped by these...”)
- Add music or sound effects that enhance the experience – don’t over do it.

Audio Recording



Physics of Sound

- **Volume** (measured in decibels - *db*)
- **Dynamics** (range of intensity)
- **Frequency** (measured in hertz – *hz*,, *ranging through low* (bass), Mid, and High (treble))
- **Space** (direction and reverberation)

Audio recording and editing correlates

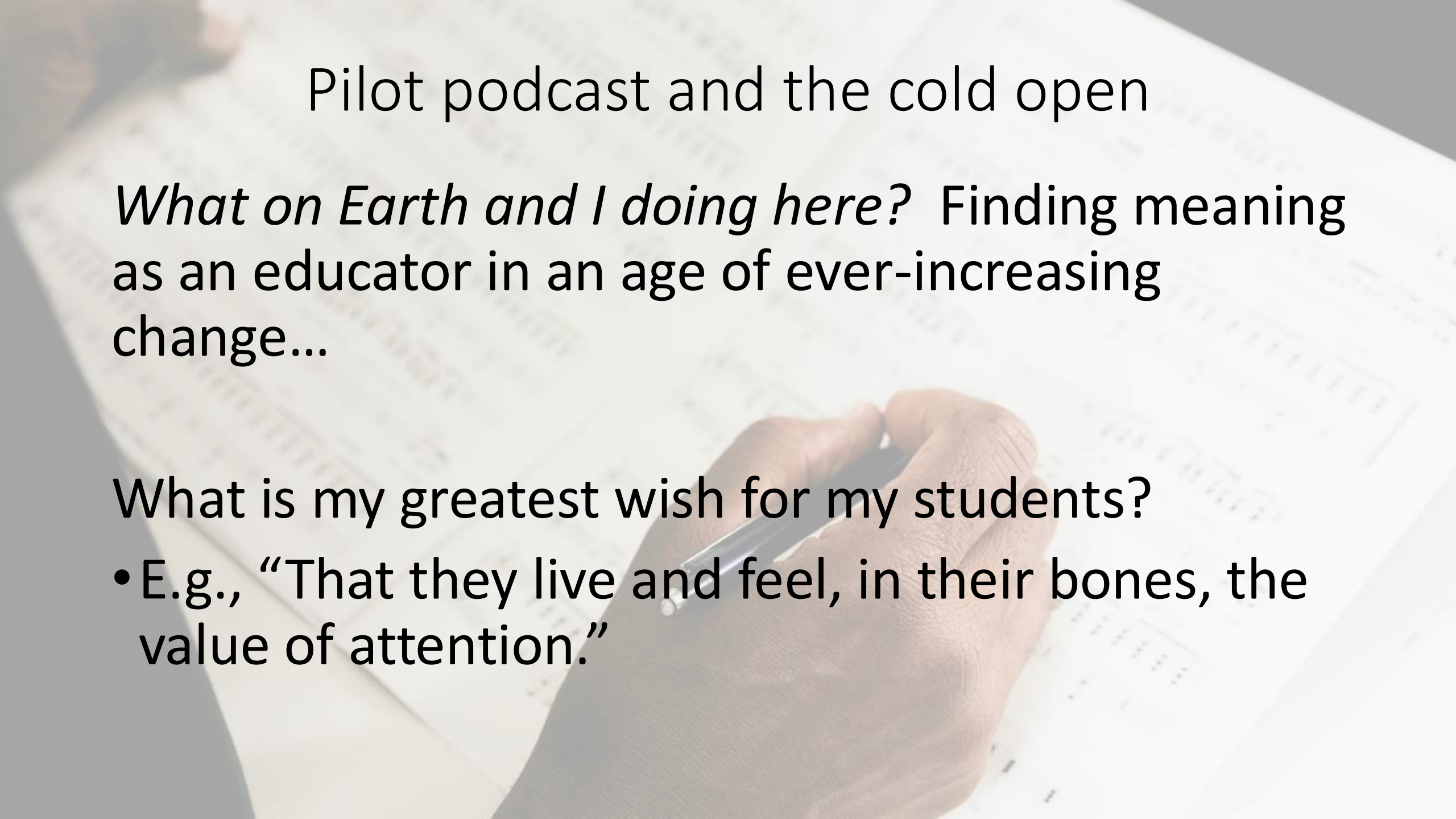
Property of sound	Recording control	Editing control (Audacity)	Effect (when intentional)
Volume	Gain (microphone)	Volume /Amplification / Fade in and out	Focus
Dynamic range	Practice and intention	Compression / Normalization	Texture and Depth
Frequency	Practice and intention	Equalization (EQ)	Balance and Depth
Reverberation	Distance from microphone, size of space, textures and angles of surfaces	Reverb	Focus and Depth
Direction	Stereo / omnidirectional recording (microphone)	Panning	Focus, Balance, and Depth

Recording Technical Aspects

- Recording (Microphones):
 - Directional (shotgun, cardioid, dynamic) vs omnidirectional
 - Mono (single source/signal) or Stereo (multiple sources/signals)
- Environment:
 - “Studio” – with sound isolation and dampening, not too cavernous, soft and/or angled surfaces
 - “Field” – Invest in (or borrow) a purpose-built (smartphone) microphone with a windscreen on the mic
- Application:
 - Audio software (desktop, phone app, or cloud) for (some) control

Recording hazards

- Reverb (sound bouncing around):
 - Easy to add, hard to subtract
 - More reverb suggests large spaces or distances; control through room/space textures and size of spaces and distance from microphone
- Gain (mic sensitivity / input volume)
 - Easy to boost, hard to refine overdriven recording (distorted)
 - Check levels prior to recording, err on the side of quiet (lower gain)
- Breathing and other unintended noises
 - Possible to mitigate during recording and/or editing
 - Cut script into breath-size chunks / lean back in between or when taking a breath
 - Record a separate track of room/space ambience to cover any de-amplification during editing, or copy "dead air passages" and paste in a separate covering track

A background image showing a close-up of a person's hand holding a pen, poised to write on a document. The document appears to be a form or a set of notes with some faint, illegible text. The lighting is soft, and the focus is on the hand and the pen.

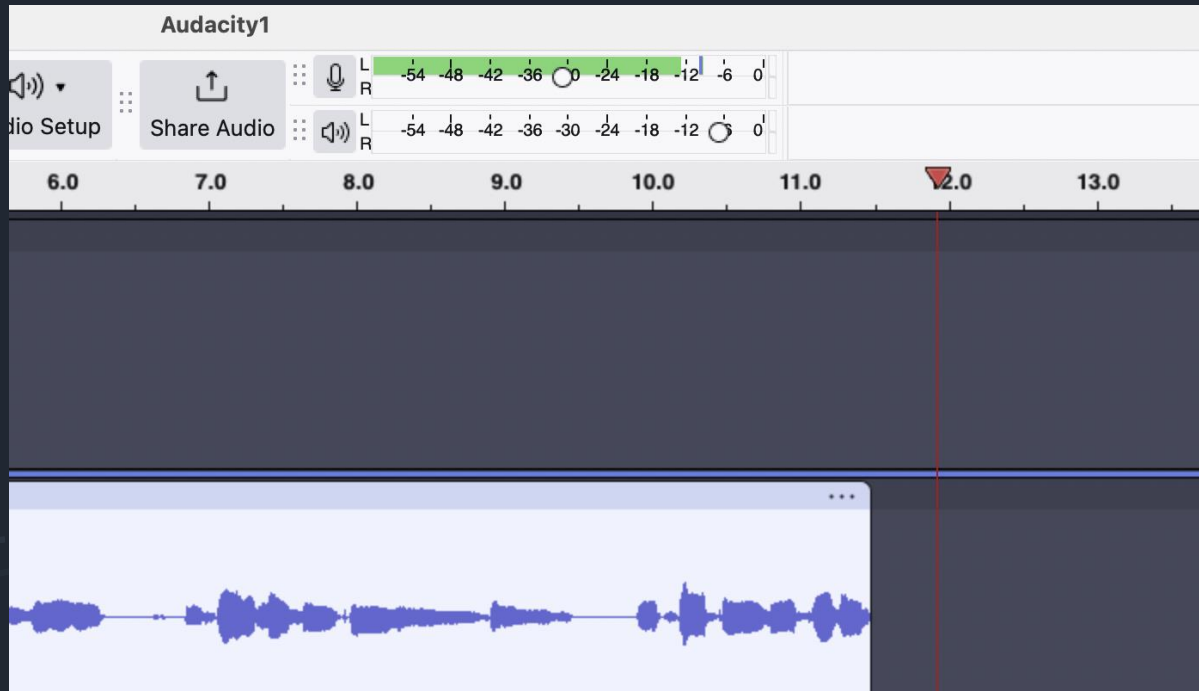
Pilot podcast and the cold open

What on Earth and I doing here? Finding meaning as an educator in an age of ever-increasing change...

What is my greatest wish for my students?

- E.g., “That they live and feel, in their bones, the value of attention.”

Recording Gain and Dynamic Range



Range of intensity (volume), measured in decibels (db) a recording/listening device is capable of capturing or reproducing

0 db is the device's relative ceiling, above which sounds will be cut or clipped, i.e., lost forever, resulting in distortion

-15 to -10 db is a comfortable range to aim for in recording output

Sound design resources

- freesound.org | soundtrap.com | uppbeat.io | GarageBand | Ableton
- Make and record your own music and sound effects
- Copyright considerations and attribution

