

Digital Asset Development: Lab Session 4 – Audio Editing in Audacity

Learning Audacity

This lab session introduces the basic workflows involved in editing audio files using Audacity. You should firstly view the two videos available on Moodle that show how the Audacity interface is set up. These are relevant even for students who have used the package already, as there will be parts of the interface you probably won't have explored.

Audacity comes with a fairly comprehensive user manual, which is accessed through the Help > Manual command. The manual is in HTML format and should open in your default browser. The main screen starts with a clickable guide to the Audacity interface, which is a useful adjunct to the introductory videos. Beneath this are a set of tutorials and some guidance on specific aspects of the package's use. Some of these are quite specialized and lie beyond the scope of the module learning outcomes, so will not be covered in these labs.

Once you are clear about the basic interface, you should work through the tutorial on *Editing an Audio File*. For this you will need some audio files to edit. A zip file containing a variety of royalty-free music, loops and jingles is available on the Moodle page for your use, but you are free to download audio for learning purposes (sites like freesound.org are a good place to start looking) or use your own audio files. You can also find various Windows chimes and similar sounds on your hard drive. It is recommended that you use stereo audio files when learning the capabilities of the software. You will also find that shorter tracks are handier for experimenting with. The *Editing an Audio File* tutorial gives you a hands-on introduction to importing, inspecting and exporting a piece of audio, as well as carrying out basic edits in Audacity. You should take the time to explore fully the various tools and controls highlighted in the tutorial.

When you finish the *Editing an Audio File* tutorial, you should move to the Using Audacity section of the manual and work through the *Editing with Audacity* lessons. Pay particular attention to the lessons on *Splitting and Joining Audio Tracks*, *Creating a Crossfade*, and *Mixing Audio Tracks*, as these techniques are fundamental for many sound editing tasks. You should also explore the huge range of audio effects that Audacity can support by viewing the *Effects, Generators and Analyzers* section. Experiment with altering the pitch, speed and tempo of sounds, and with using echo and reverb.

Once you have viewed the various lessons and tutorials, you should apply these creative editing techniques to the sounds you have available. Try and come up with a "sound collage" of 60 seconds duration that uses a range of effects and editing ideas.

Further Work

You should all download and install Audacity at home – it is completely free software. You can then work through the tutorial sections on recording sounds into Audacity. For obvious reasons, this is better done on your home computer than in the lab! You should be able to record using the system microphone, or via a headset with a microphone.

In next week's lab we will look at more advanced techniques and methods for processing audio in Audacity.