Aura™

SUPPORTING COMPLEX TEACHING ENVIRONMENTS AT SCALE

At the University of Oxford's new Life and Mind Building (LaMB), Aura delivered a coordinated AV solution spanning teaching, laboratory and collaboration spaces – enabling hybrid learning and lecture delivery across a complex, multi-use academic environment.

Consistent user experience across diverse room types

Hybrid and lecture capture embedded as standard

Designed to perform within real-world constraints

Image: LaMB Joining BioLab

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

The Life and Mind Building (LaMB) at the University of Oxford is a major £200m interdisciplinary research facility in Oxford, bringing together teams from Experimental Psychology and Biology within a single, purpose-designed environment of approximately 269,000 sq ft. The building supports a wide range of activity – from laboratory-based research to teaching and collaboration – creating a shared setting designed to encourage interaction between disciplines that have traditionally operated separately.

The AV brief spanned lecture theatres, seminar rooms, computer labs, wet labs and a large number of meeting rooms, each with different requirements but all needing to support straightforward, reliable operation for teaching staff and students.

The project was consultant-led, with Aura working in close collaboration with the consultant Hewshott and University teams to deliver the agreed design. This truly collaborative approach was a defining feature of the project, with all parties contributing to problem-solving and refinement of the solution throughout delivery.

At the same time, elements of the building infrastructure had been defined ahead of AV requirements, which introduced constraints around bandwidth, connectivity and device deployment, requiring coordination with Hewshott and the University's network team to ensure the system could operate effectively within the available environment.

The challenge was therefore to implement a system that works consistently across a wide range of spaces, supports both teaching and collaboration, and performs reliably within pre-defined architectural and infrastructure constraints.

SOLUTION

Aura delivered a comprehensive AV deployment across teaching, laboratory and collaboration spaces, built around a Q-Sys control and signal distribution platform. The solution spans a broad mix of environments, including lecture theatres, seminar rooms, computer labs, wet laboratory teaching spaces and a wide range of meeting rooms, each configured to support consistent operation despite differing functional requirements.

Microsoft Teams capability was deployed across teaching and collaboration spaces, supporting hybrid participation where required, while lecture capture was delivered using Epiphan hardware recorders integrated with the University's Panopto platform.

Spaces were designed to be simple to use for teaching staff. Voice reinforcement is delivered via ceiling microphones, removing the need for wearable microphones and enabling presenters to move freely within the space. In lecture theatres, AI-based camera tracking enables presenters to move naturally while maintaining a consistent view for remote participants.

The solution was carefully adapted to suit different teaching environments. For example, in wet laboratory spaces, where students are working individually, a wireless transmission system allows content from digital microscopes to be shared across the wider cohort, enabling real-time teaching from live student work.

Acoustic design was shaped by the building's architecture. In lecture theatres with complex ceiling geometry, traditional ceiling speaker layouts were not viable, so speaker coverage was modelled and simulated, with the final approach developed collaboratively with Hewshott to ensure consistent audio throughout the space. The resulting design led to a solution where column speakers at the front of the room were supplemented with additional infill units, to ensure consistent audio throughout the space.

Further refinements to the original design were made during delivery. In the wet laboratory teaching spaces, the initial specification for networked speakers was revised due to limited ceiling network points and constrained cable tray capacity.

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SOLUTION

Aura worked with the consultant to redesign the system using networked amplifiers and conventional pendant speakers, reducing cabling requirements, lowering demand on network switch ports, and improving overall efficiency.

Accessibility was enhanced through the addition of Ampetronic Auri across larger teaching spaces. This Bluetooth-based assisted listening system had been introduced by Aura on a previous University project, and is now being adopted more widely as standard across the estate.

Throughout all spaces, the focus remained on delivering systems that are straightforward to operate, flexible enough to support different teaching scenarios, and robust within the constraints of the building's infrastructure.

Image: LaMB Computer Lab

BUSINESS OUTCOME

The completed solution provides a consistent and reliable AV experience across a diverse range of teaching and collaboration spaces within the building.

Teaching staff can enter a room and begin delivering sessions without needing to manage complex technology, supported by automated audio and camera systems that enable natural presentation. Students benefit from clearer audio, access to recorded content where lecture capture is in place, and the ability to view shared visual content in specialist teaching spaces.

Hybrid capability is embedded across key teaching environments, supporting remote participation and guest contribution, while laboratory-specific solutions enable more interactive teaching approaches based on live student work.

Despite constraints within the building's network and physical infrastructure, Aura, Hewshott and the University worked closely together through open communication and shared problem-solving, ensuring challenges were resolved effectively, resulting in a system that performs reliably within its environment.

The project is also characterised by a strong working relationship between all parties, with open collaboration and shared problem-solving contributing to a smooth delivery process and a positive outcome for the University.

Image: LaMB Lecture Theatre

> ***The success of this project demonstrates the strength of our relationship with Aura. Despite significant challenges, they were able to understand our needs to develop and install an AV system that exactly meets the requirements of this flagship teaching and research building and which is already providing an aspirational standard for the rest of the University.***
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> Jake Bevan, AV Solutions Manager, University of Oxford

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