



# Creating a podcast

Although hugely popular now, podcasts were just taking off in 2011 when then-students Dr Chris Cotter and Dr David Robertson co-founded theirs. Chris reveals what it was like to set up *The Religious Studies Project*.

**It all started in the University of Edinburgh student union.** David and I had been introduced by our lecturer at the time, Prof Carole Cusack. We realised while chatting that we both listened to a lot of podcasts but there wasn't anything out there covering religious studies. We thought, "That'd be fun to do. Surely it can't be too difficult?"

**Our ambitions were no greater than interviewing ten guest speakers,** who were part of a seminar series. We were then going to our first conference – held by the British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR) – and thought we'd try to record some interviews there. People were very enthused at the idea and willing to chat. We left with five podcasts in the bag and the podcast name, which we'd thought of in the pub!

**The BASR backed us from the beginning.** They couldn't provide any funding but offered their name for legitimacy. David and I both put in £100 for a Zoom H2 Handy Recorder and the rest went on a web domain and website. A year later, the BASR gave us £500, and have done so every year since. Then the North American Association pitched in. Then the Australian, European and International Associations.

**Accessible content remains our editorial manifesto.** We wanted an easy way to stay up to date, so episodes are short (30 minutes) and follow the same format. It's also about providing a sense of community. To that end, we take audience feedback seriously and have used criticism positively, such as tightening our vetting procedure after it transpired that a contributor's work was considered controversial elsewhere in the world.

**There are now 400 episodes and counting, with more than a million downloads overall.** Our podcasts are Creative Commons license. People can use them and chop and change them as long as they give credit.

We can never really predict which ones will be picked up, for example the [Church Times reviewed us during the Covid-19 pandemic](#).

**My main advice for anyone starting out is to establish the podcast's purpose.** Be enthusiastic about your subject. Have a regular output to help build an audience: Trello can help when planning content. Quality sound is a must – Zencastr is great as it captures the audio at each end. Oh, and don't publish anything before googling how to make sure Spotify and iTunes can find your podcasts.

**Know when to step back is my other tip.** David and I stood down from the day-to-day in 2019, staying on as editors-in-chief. The podcast was started with the enthusiasm of youth, and we've since gone on to assume more work and life responsibilities. We've now had two cycles of managing editors – David McConeghy and Breann Fallon being our first, and Andie Alexander our current – all of whom bring incredible energy and talent.

**The podcast may have been started by two people, but there's a whole cast involved.** I owe a lot of my career success to the podcast, but it wouldn't have been possible without our [contributors](#) and sponsors, as well as the [editorial teams past and present](#). We are also indebted to *The Religious Studies Project Association*, which is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

**There are ambitions for growth.** The magazine style of *This American Life* has always been an inspiration. The other goal is multilingualism. The podcast is currently English-language only, but we'd be happy to collaborate with others, perhaps even making *The Religious Studies Project* a franchise of sorts.



**Dr Chris Cotter**  
Staff Tutor in Sociology and Religious Studies

Chris joined the OU in 2022, and specialises in 'non-religious' stuff, method and theory, qualitative research, discourse analysis and religion in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

[View Chris's profile](#)