



[The Open University](#) is today celebrating the 40th anniversary of the broadcast of its first educational lecture on BBC television.

Since the ground-breaking transmission aired on BBC Two on January 3rd 1971 there have been more than 7,000 television and 4,000 radio transmissions as part of the collaboration agreement between The Open University and the BBC.

Broadcasts began with late night lectures, providing visual tutorial aids for students enrolled on the new distance-learning courses from the Open University. Around 25,000 students signed up for courses in the OU's first year. The institution now has around 250,000 students, including 20,000 overseas.

Open University Professor Michael Drake, who took part in the early recordings, recalled the various challenges involved with the broadcasts. He said: "Each programme took one day. We rehearsed once then recorded it with no stopping because of errors."

The late night lectures transferred to the early hours after video recorders became more widely available for students to record the programmes.

Since the 1990s, the OU/BBC partnership has also evolved into primetime programming on radio and TV, including *Coast*, *Bang Goes the Theory*, *Rough Science*, *Seven Ages of Britain*, *James May's Big Ideas*

and

*Olympic Dreams*

. An estimated 300 million people tuned in to OU/BBC programmes in 2009/2010 alone.

Dr Sally Crompton, head of the university's Open Broadcasting Unit, said: "The Open University's partnership with the BBC provides a unique way to combine academic expertise and high quality production.

"TV, radio and online content brings education to millions of people and, while it has evolved from late night programmes to mainstream television, it is still central to what the OU does, making learning accessible.

"Through our partnership with the BBC, we stimulate people's curiosity, open up access to new learning opportunities, transfer knowledge across a wide range of areas and we look forward to

working together in the future."

*By Andrew Laughlin, Technology Reporter*

*Source: [digitalspy.co.uk](http://digitalspy.co.uk)*