Podcasting
Academic Tip Sheet

This academic tip sheet:

- explains what is meant by a podcast;
- looks at the different types of podcasts;
- describes how to get access to podcasts; and
- explains how to make a podcast.

What is a podcast?

The word 'podcasting' was originally associated with the distribution of audio files over the Internet using an XML based RSS feed. Individuals can subscribe to a 'podcast' and download it to their personal computers (see over). Once an individual subscribes to a podcast they automatically receive new shows as they are developed and published. These files can also be transferred to small portable devices such as an iPod, MP3 player, mobile phone, or PDA. Some podcasting sites refer to podcasting as netcasting.
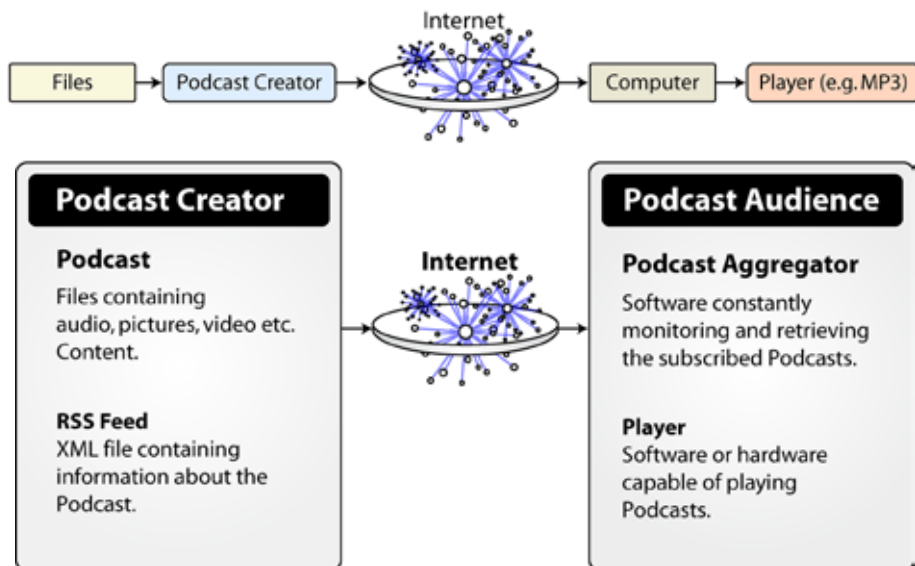
Vodcasting

Some people use the term 'vodcast' to refer to a podcast of video files. However, the term podcasting can be used to cover the distribution of any files, whether they are audio, still images or video as long as they follow the feed and subscription model.

Streaming

Podcasting should not be confused with streaming which:

- requires the user to be connected to the internet while playing the file;

Podcast Creator → Internet → Computer → Player (e.g. MP3)

Podcast Creator

Podcast
Files containing audio, pictures, video etc. Content.

RSS Feed
XML file containing information about the Podcast.

Podcast Audience

Podcast Aggregator
Software constantly monitoring and retrieving the subscribed Podcasts.

Player
Software or hardware capable of playing Podcasts.

- restricts the user to one source at a time; and
- does not allow the user to save a copy of the file.

Streaming is sometimes referred to as webcasting.

Types of podcasts

The most common file forms for podcasting are audio or video but the files could be of any file type including images and PDF. There are three main types of podcast:

1. **Audio only:** These are like radio. They are generally in mp3 format. They can be made on both PCs and Macs and can be played using an mp3 player. This is a popular form of podcasting as they are relatively easy to make and the resulting files are generally small. [*Preferred filetype .mp3*]

2. **Audio and still images:** These are also referred to as enhanced podcasts. The commonest educational form is a PowerPoint or Keynote presentation with an audio track. The main advantages of these types of podcast are their small file size compared with video and that they can be chaptered. Enhanced podcasts enable the audience to jump directly to a slide they wish to view in the podcast. [*Preferred filetype .m4a or .m4b*]

3. **Video:** These are like TV. Generally they are large file sizes. When making them, you need to be careful with compression technologies as choosing the wrong format may make it impossible for the file to be played on both Macs and PCs. [*Preferred filetype .m4v*]

Listening or viewing a podcast

You can use iTunes to download and listen to a range of podcasts either from the Apple iTunes site or from other places. Make sure you have the latest copy of iTunes which you can download from the Apple website.

Subscribing to a podcast in iTunes.

You can subscribe a podcast in two ways:

1. From a known address.

For example, if you wanted to listen to the 'Life Matters' podcast you would go to the ABC Radio National podcast website. You can access 'Life Matters' from there and then copy the podcast URL the ABC provides. [http://www.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/feeds/lifemats.xml]. Next go into iTunes and use the menu Advanced > Subscribe to a Podcast. A dialogue box comes up and you can paste in the URL you got from the ABC Radio National site. The Life Matters podcast then appears in the podcast list.

2. Using a podcast from the list in iTunes.

Apple has listed a large number of podcasts that you can access directly from within iTunes. To see these, click on the link to the podcast directory when you are connected to the internet. Once in the directory, you can browse through the available podcasts, select one that interest you, then click the subscribe button and the rest is done for you. You can also use 'search' to find a particular podcast or subject.

If at any time you decide to stop subscribing to a podcast then select the relevant site in your iTunes list and hit the unsubscribe button.

Synching podcasts to your iPod

Assuming that you have the latest updated software, this is simply a matter of synching the iPod with your computer.

Making an effective podcast

It is a relatively simple procedure to make a podcast; making an effective podcast is a different matter. Before you start, consider the following questions:

1. **What will be the nature of the podcast?**
   - What is the content going to be?

- Will it be an audio, enhanced or video podcast?
- Will it be a one off, or a series?

2. **How will you record the podcast?**
   - What software will you be using?
   - What sort of microphone will you need?
   - Will you record it on your computer or use a mobile device?

3. **Will you need assistance?**
   - Have you viewed or listened to some examples of podcasts?
   - Do you have the skills and resources to make a podcast?
   - Is there someone you know who has already made a podcast who could mentor you?
   - Have you allocated enough time to the task?

Resources

There are a number of resources you can use:

Audacity: *http://audacity.sourceforge.net* [Free Mac & PC] "Audacity is free, open source software for recording and editing sounds. It is available for Mac OS X, MicroSoft Windows, GNU/Linux, and other operating systems."

GarageBand
[Free with every Mac] With GarageBand, you can record, edit, and mix an audio or enhanced podcast.

Jing: *http://www.jingproject.com* [Free Mac & PC]. Jing allows you to capture a screencast less than 5 minutes long and will save it as a .flv file. You can use other applications to stitch these files together and convert them into .m4v (or use the Media Convert website below to do it for you).

Media Convert *http://media-convert.com* [Free Mac & PC] This website will convert almost any file type into a format that is more suitable for your needs.

Podcast checklist

- **Do you know what type of podcast you are going to make?**
- **Do you have access to the appropriate equipment to make the podcast?**
- **Have you created the podcast in the correct file type?**
- **Have you submitted your podcast on time and in the correct format?**

Acknowledgements