

Chapter 20

Supporting Faculty Through Podcasting

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&

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In today's world of academia, you may all be quite familiar with this scenario. It's the start of yet another year and you are in the midst of getting your courses ready for the semester. You've just come back from a conference and are completely overwhelmed by buzz words such as “Web 2.0,” “Podcasts,” “Twitter,” “Social Media,” “Micro-blogging,” “RSS,” “Wiki,” “Blogs,” “Second Life,” “Cloud Computing” and so on. You'd love to integrate some of these technologies into your class but have no idea where to begin. It's beginning to feel like technology has become your biggest enemy.

Well you are not alone, here at CU Online—like similar departments at other institutions—we strive to find different ways to help faculty make sense of technology and find ways to meaningfully use technology in their classrooms. We hold workshops, conferences, and work one-on-one with faculty (see Lowenthal & Thomas, 2010 for a description of other ways we support faculty). But one day during a brainstorming session, it occurred to us that the University community could benefit from a weekly podcast that helps faculty and staff stay in “tune” with technology. The light bulb came on and TechHEds was born. In the following paragraphs, we share our experience creating TechHEds—a weekly podcast we created for faculty. While neither of us work at the University of Colorado Denver anymore and TechHEds is no longer produced, in the following pages we will share our experience supporting faculty through podcasting in hopes of motivating some of you to start your own weekly podcast.

What is a Podcast?

I'm sure you have all heard of the word "podcast" before, but do you know what it means? Wikipedia describes a podcast as “a series of digital media files (either audio or video) that are released episodically and often downloaded through web syndication” (“Podcast,” 2010, para 1). Typically, a podcast is a series of audio files (e.g., mp3 files) published regularly that users can subscribe to and listen to. Users have the ability to download each episode of a podcast onto any mp3 audio device such as an Apple iPod, Microsoft Zune or Creative Zen. Accessing a podcast though is not just limited to an mp3 audio device; you can also play the audio or video file on your computer by accessing it directly from a website (e.g., National Public Radio's http://www.npr.org/rss/podcast/podcast_directory.php) or download it to the desktop of your computer and listen to it using a media player such as Windows Media Player, RealPlayer or iTunes.

The word podcast originally derived its name from the iPod manufactured by Apple Inc. But podcasts and podcasting did not originate from Apple, and it does not require owning an iPod to listen/or view podcasts. Many early podcasters adopted the term. Then in the summer of 2005, Apple added podcasting support to iTunes allowing iPod users to subscribe and listen to podcasts. It's no surprise that the term “podcast” stuck. Today many explain that a Podcast stands for **Personal OnDemand Cast**.

A great thing about podcasts—especially audio podcasts—is that they are easy and fairly inexpensive to produce. A full production studio is far from necessary to begin podcasting and if you already have access to a desktop computer or laptop, this can easily be done for under \$50 (though you can of course spend much more). The basic equipment needed to start creating a podcast includes the following: (a) a computer (PC or Mac); (b) a USB microphone or headset microphone; and (c) audio recording software (see Table 1 for more specifics on microphones and software).

Table 1. Podcasting Tools

Tool	Options
USB Microphone	Logitech http://www.logitech.com/en-au/speakers-audio/microphones
	Zoom H1 Handy Recorder http://www.zoom.co.jp/english/products/h1/
	Snowball http://www.bluemic.com/snowball/
USB Headset Microphone	Logitech http://www.logitech.com/en-au/webcam-communications/internet-headsets-phones
Software	Audacity http://audacity.sourceforge.net free and cross platform (PC / Mac)
	GarageBand http://www.apple.com/ilife/garageband/ Comes standard on new Macs (Mac)
	Adobe Audition (PC) http://www.adobe.com/products/audition/
	Resources
	Audacity http://audacity.sourceforge.net/manual-1.2/tutorials.html http://www.how-to-podcast-tutorial.com/17-audacity-tutorial.htm
	Podcast FAQ http://www.podcastfaq.com/creating-podcast
	GarageBand http://www.devdaily.com/apple/mac/garage-band-create-podcast/

If you really enjoy creating podcasts, one thing you will soon realize is that though adequate, your current setup will never seem to be enough. The TechHEds team began recording in a tiny studio roughly the size of a closet and later expanded into a more “professional” studio that included higher end equipment, video cameras, and a TriCaster that publishes a live video version of the show.

We recommend though that you start with a simple setup and only build on it over time if your needs dictate it.

TechHEds and Other Educational Uses of Podcasts

As we touched on earlier, we started thinking about how to use podcasting to support our University community a few years ago. We came to the conclusion that faculty—just like students—could benefit from some of the conveniences of podcasting. So we created TechHEds, a weekly podcast to help faculty stay in “tune” with technology. There have been over 75 episodes of TechHEds covering content from academic dishonesty to teaching with games, to music in learning.

In addition to creating audio podcasts, the TechHEds team produced a couple of video podcasts, which are downloadable short videos. The following are two examples.



TechHEds Video Podcast #1 Twitter
<http://www.viddler.com/player/29baaf11/>



TechHEds Video Podcast #2 Google Docs
<http://www.viddler.com/player/f274a002/>

From our perspective, TechHEds was a success. In addition to helping faculty stay in tune with advances in technology in higher education, we strived to model ways faculty might use podcasting their own classrooms. For instance, podcasts can be used as a creative way to introduce yourself to your online class. Podcasts can also be used to give your students a break from reading another tedious chapter by recording short lectures' as audio or video podcasts. Finally, you can even have your students create podcasts instead of a traditional paper or presentation.

Concluding Thoughts

We hope we have added a little inspiration for you to go out and start creating your own podcasts. Whether it is a short introduction of yourself for your students or spicing up a lecture, the topics are endless! Feel free to contact us at CU Online. We don't want you to walk away feeling like technology is your enemy, but rather we strive to help you gain the confidence you need to embrace technology with open arms. The popularity of podcasting has and will continue to grow, so we encourage you to challenge yourself and find creative ways to integrate podcasting into your classroom.

References

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Bios

Anna Thai has returned to the land down under and is currently working as a LMS Infrastructure Technologist at Victoria University. In between researching and testing emerging technologies for implementation, her work experiences in both Australia and America and given her the opportunity to outreach to faculty. She has a MS in Information and Communication Sciences from Ball State University and hopes to return to Colorado to pursue her PhD in Educational Technology.

Brian Yuhnke adamantly believes that if teaching is boring for the faculty then it is even more so for the students. Brian is motivated to engage faculty in the use of technology to make learning fun and innovative. He is an Instructional Designer at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, and an Instructor for the School of Education and Higher Development at the University of Colorado Denver. Prior to moving to Cleveland, Brian did sensational stuff with video, supported web conferencing and online lecture recording, researched emerging technologies and all kinds of other randomness for CU Online at the University of Colorado Denver. He has earned a MEd in Instructional Technology and a Bachelor of Arts in Video and Audio Production from Kent State University.