

# LIBRARY INSTRUCTION ON THE GO: PODCASTING AT THE KRESGE LIBRARY

JENNIFER ZIMMER AND SALLY ZIPH

Business school students today are busier than ever. They want to plug in, download and go. That's where podcasting comes in as a non-traditional medium and delivery mechanism to enhance student learning. The University of Michigan *Kresge Library Dash Podcast Series* delivers a substantial sound and visual "bite" of information on business information topics. The episodes, which run between 7-30 minutes, are designed to help students get the most out of the Kresge Library and its often overwhelming array of resources. The episodes are "enhanced" podcasts, combining voice, images, video and links to websites, which can be played on an iPod, or by using iTunes or QuickTime on the student's computer. Librarians write scripts on a variety of topics including company information, market research and SWOT analysis. Each of these episodes is designed to be listened to linearly, or in "chapters" which allow users to skip to a certain section of the episode.

In this presentation we discuss the process the library went through in starting an instructional podcasting program, including an overview of the equipment and software used. Successes and pitfalls encountered are discussed. We also present findings from an informal student survey about the instructional podcasts.

## PILOTING PODCASTING

The library began a pilot podcasting project in the summer of 2006. The University of Michigan Dental School had been working closely with Apple and iTunes U on a project to create podcasts of classroom lectures. After attending a presentation given by the campus Apple representative and the Dental School, the library decided that this would be a good way

to push out library instruction to our increasingly time-crunched student population. Podcasting would allow us to provide fairly detailed instruction in a preferred format that was portable and could be listened to anywhere at any time.

Several possibilities were explored for methods to create the podcasts. It was decided that the best way to create quality podcasts quickly and easily was to purchase the right equipment. While creating these sound files in MP3 format would be easy enough on a Windows based machine, the desired functionality of an "enhanced" podcast with images to support the narrative, chaptering and linking capabilities could quickly and seamlessly be produced in a Mac environment.

Based on recommendations from the Apple representative, the library purchased a 15" MacBook Pro with OSX (version 10.4.5), 1.83 GHz Intel Core Duo, 512 MB DDR2 SDRAM. The key components needed for podcasting were audio inputs and 512MB of memory. A decent microphone was recommended to capture the audio. While microphones can be very expensive, the library decided to purchase the Plantronics DSP 500 Microphone Headset, a modestly priced gaming headset with an attached microphone. This provided the ability to listen to the audio output without disturbing the entire staff and have only one peripheral instead of two.

In addition to the hardware, the library purchased a professional license for QuickTime Pro and PodcastMaker. QuickTime Pro was recommended for capturing the audio. PodcastMaker had been demonstrated at the Apple presentation and was an inexpensive way to create the chaptering, add the images and metadata, upload completed Podcasts to the server and create the xml needed for the iTunes podcast subscription feed. PodcastMaker also made it extremely easy to manage multiple podcast series if we decided to branch out. The total cost of the setup was around \$2000.

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*Zimmer* (Digital Services Librarian) and  
*Ziph* (Instructional Services Librarian)  
University of Michigan [Ann Arbor, MI]

Another piece of software that was considered was Profcast. This software was designed specifically for use by professors and other lecturers to make it easy to record their lectures, add their notes or lecture slides and create and distribute enhanced podcasts for their students. Since the library's plan was to write scripts and record away from the instruction environment, this software was not purchased.

## SCRIPTWRITING

Scriptwriting was done by several members of the Kresge librarian staff. The librarians were asked to create scripts based on either their interest in a specific topic or their knowledge and expertise in a specific area of business resources. Drafts of the scripts were given to the Digital Services Librarian for final editing in preparation for recording. The scripts were edited to follow the *Kresge Library Dash Podcast* format of introduction, overview, content, recap, and conclusion. All scripts were written to be read verbatim leaving little need for improvisation. This created consistency in the style of the writing and facilitated the recording of the podcast. With a good script, it was possible for one librarian to record another librarian's podcast, creating the potential for the library to produce podcasts more frequently.

## PODCASTING AT UM AND ROSS @ iTUNES U.

When the library began its podcasting project, the Ross Business School did not have a relationship with iTunes U. The original method piloted for making podcasts available was cumbersome and time intensive. After the podcast was created, the podcast file and the xml file for the RSS feed were transferred via FTP in PodcastMaker to the author's own web space. An entry was then created on the library's blog announcing the podcast and providing links to the RSS feed and to the file. Users were instructed to copy the link for the RSS feed and paste it into the podcast subscription screen in iTunes to subscribe.

In the summer of 2006, the Ross Computing Services department began negotiations with Apple for a Ross School of Business presence in iTunes U. The library was given its own presence in the University of Michigan Ross School of Business iTunes U that September at <http://itunes.bus.umich.edu/>. From here students could download *Kresge Library Dash Podcasts* or subscribe to them using iTunes for instant updates when new episodes are added.

## FROM QUICKTIME TO GARAGEBAND

The first podcast was recorded using QuickTime Pro. It was quickly discovered that this program had some limitations. There was no way to stop and start the recording process and have a single file, which made it necessary to record the entire podcast in one take. This proved difficult to do without a strong script. The first script was re-written several times prior to the final version that was recorded. Once the audio was recorded, the file was opened in PodcastMaker and chapters, images and metadata were added to the file. The file was saved in the enhanced podcast file

format of m4a. The whole process of recording the first podcast took two days.

Following this first recording session, the Dental School presented another podcasting workshop in which the presenters showed how to use the newly updated version of GarageBand to create enhanced podcasts. This method proved to be much easier, as the recording process could be stopped and started and all recorded parts were kept in one file. GarageBand also made it easy to edit the clips to remove unwanted noises and fumbles.

The updated version of GarageBand came with a Podcast track which was designed specifically for adding images, links and chapters to the podcast. This made the process of creating the enhanced podcast much quicker as there was now one program that could be used for the entire creation process. The audio was recorded on the voice track, intro and exit music were added on the jingle track, chapters were inserted, titles and hyperlinks added and images dragged onto the podcast track to complete the episode. The podcast was then exported out as an m4a file and saved to the hard drive. The time needed to record and finalize a typical podcast was reduced to about 3-4 hours depending on the length of the script, the number of screen shots or other images to be created, and the amount of editing to be done to the recorded audio. Completed podcasts range in size from around 3MB for 4.5 minutes of enhanced audio podcast up to 235MB for 23 minutes of video.

Once finished, the podcast files are sent to Computing Services to be uploaded to the Kresge Library section of Ross iTunes U. The new episodes usually appear on the library iTunes U site within 24 hours. (Currently, the library is not able to manage their own Ross iTunes U section.) Links to the new episodes are added to the Kresge Library Dash web page. Two options are given for each file, iTunes or download. The download options allows users to listen to the podcasts, view the images and use the embedded links with QuickTime in their web browser. The iTunes link launches the iTunes software on the user's computer and takes them directly to the Kresge Library page on Ross iTunes U. From here the user can choose to listen to the individual episodes, download them to their iTunes library or subscribe to the podcast in order to be notified of future episodes that are added to the series. At this time, only users with iPods can listen to the podcasts on their portable device.

## VIDEO + PODCASTING = VODCASTING

After we had several enhanced podcasts created, the library decided to create a video-based podcast to gauge the effectiveness of video for this instruction delivery method. We enlisted the help of the talented staff from the Video Streaming Media Services in Computing Services to do the recording. The session was recorded without a live audience to allow for mistakes and a more relaxed atmosphere. The session was recorded to digital video tape with a professional grade video camera. A wireless microphone was used to capture the sound for the video. Once the taping was complete, the tape was given to the library to complete the editing.

The recording was captured to Windows-based digital video editing workstations available in the student computing labs. The resulting file was extremely large and needed editing. Unfortunately, the two video editing options available on the workstation were both a bit difficult to work with. Windows Movie Maker had an easy to use interface and was pretty simple, but did not have the capability to export in the correct file format. Adobe Premier had an extremely complicated interface, but offered more options for editing and enhancing the video and was capable of exporting to multiple file formats, including QuickTime and several different versions of MPEG, needed to create the QuickTime compatible video for the podcast.

Editing the video proved to be the most challenging part of creating the podcast. The majority of the problems centered around file format incompatibility. Several different types of image and video files were added to the original footage to enhance the recording, specifically, captured video of the searches being performed by the instructor. These searches were not recorded live. Time stamps from the original video were recorded for the different databases being demonstrated. The searches were then recreated and captured with Camtasia. The resulting video files were individually exported and then imported into the original video in Adobe Premier. This job was complicated by the fact that video editing workstations were not connected to the network or Internet and did not have the correct codec for reading the Camtasia files. There were also large discrepancies between the quality of the original video and the output from Camtasia.

Once the video was edited, it had to be exported from Premier in a format that could easily be imported into iMovie for the final edits to create the podcast. Exporting the video was complicated by the fact that all attempts to export the file to a QuickTime format caused repeated software crashes on the video editing workstation. The MPEG format output by Adobe Premier was unreadable by the Mac and iMovie. The MPEG 1 output from Adobe Premier was the only format which could successfully be read by both QuickTime and iMovie on the Mac. Once the file was successfully imported to the Mac and into iMovie, chapters and links were added at the appropriate points. The final “vodcast” was exported as a QuickTime movie for use with iTunes or as a standalone download. Because of the large file size, two different options were given for the download version, a low resolution version and a higher resolution version.

## **STUDENT FEEDBACK--PODCASTING SURVEY**

After the podcasts and “vodcast” were created, the library decided to create a short informal survey to get some feedback on this new instruction format. We especially wanted to know if users liked the format, whether they liked the video or audio podcasts better, and what instructional content they preferred. This informal survey aimed to capture feedback from ten UM Business School students (BBA and MBA). As an incentive, a \$10 Borders book store gift card was offered to each student upon completion of the survey. The students were asked to listen to ten minutes of any audio podcast (out of seven or so available)

and to watch ten minutes of the video podcast (one available). Then they were asked to complete the short questionnaire and to return it to the library, either in person, or later, when this proved difficult, via email.

## **SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS**

- The first question asked them how they found out about the podcasts. Most found out through an email sent to the student body about doing the survey even though the podcasts were advertised on the Kresge Library web site.
- Regarding the podcast format, students liked the fact that they didn't have to worry about downloading it. However, we got a complaint that the screenshots were too small, and when enlarged they became fuzzy.
- No one listened or viewed the podcasts on iPods.
- One student complained that the vodcast was “jumpy”.
- Students liked the Market Research audio podcast the best.
- When asked “What is one thing you remember from the podcast?” several remembered sources or services which called for a librarian's intervention, like the Frost & Sullivan database, or IM reference.
- Since they only had to listen to ten minutes of the podcast, the students were asked if they would finish the podcast on their own, or listen to another one. All students said they would finish the current podcast, or another one; or that they had finished the podcast, other podcasts, or the video.
- Topics suggested for future podcasts leaned toward the practical or in-depth topics--interview preparation, job hunting or digging into one database such as MINTEL, EBSCO, PROQUEST.

## **INSTRUCTION FORMAT PREFERENCES:**

We asked the student survey respondents to rank the different formats of library instruction offered in this pilot and by the library - video podcasts, live library instruction, audio podcasts, and printed handouts - on a scale of 1 to 5, with one being ‘like the most’. The survey found that students liked the video podcast the best followed by live library instruction with audio podcasts in third place. While video was the number one choice for the podcast medium, students also seem to like audio podcasting, making it worth our time to produce them until vodcasting becomes even easier.

## **WHAT THE SURVEY RESULTS SUGGEST:**

Overall, students liked the podcast format as a method for providing library instruction. They felt that podcasting was

the most helpful to them for sources that cover practical topics, such as interviewing, or sources that require in-depth instruction. They liked the fact that they could skip around in the instruction and listen or re-listen to parts that were important to them. The results suggest that podcasting is a viable option for providing library instruction and that this service will be used and seen as valuable by the students.

## **FUTURE PODS**

Based upon user feedback and the relative ease of creating the episodes, the Kresge Library will move the project out of the pilot phase and incorporate podcasting into the existing library instruction program. The survey results indicated that users preferred the video format over the enhanced audio format, so the library will focus more effort in that area. Any new video podcasts to be created will be done directly on the Mac using iMovie or GarageBand to alleviate the issues encountered with video during the pilot phase. We will continue to ask our users for feedback about the podcast medium and future topics that they would like to see covered. Overall, we think that this will be an excellent way for the library to greatly enhance the topic depth, range, and the immediacy of our instructional offerings.

## **HELPFUL RESOURCES**

Podcast Creation Guide - <http://images.apple.com/education/solutions/podcasting/pdf/PodcastCreationGuide.pdf> - This helpful guide is a bit dated (Fall 2005), but still provides good basic information on what a podcast is and the mechanics behind creating one. It also includes helpful information on setting up iTunes for compressing the podcast in the correct file format and basic information on recording in GarageBand.

Podcasting Legal Guide: Rules for the Revolution - [http://mirrors.creativecommons.org/Podcasting\\_Legal\\_Guide.pdf](http://mirrors.creativecommons.org/Podcasting_Legal_Guide.pdf) - A nice guide that covers the legal issues surrounding copyright for content, music, images and distribution of podcasts.

GarageBand3 - <http://www.apple.com/ilife/garageband/> - Software from Apple for quickly creating enhanced podcasts. It is a part of the iLife '06 suite of software, which includes iMovie.

Profcast - <http://www.profcast.com/> - Designed to allow recording and synchronization of lectures with PowerPoint slides for quick conversion into podcasts. For Mac only.

Camtasia - <http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.asp> - Easy to use program for recording on screen actions and movement. The new version incorporates features that make it easy to publish movies in a format that is compatible with iPods and other portable media players.

PodcastMaker from Lemonz Dream - <http://www.lemonzdream.com/podcastmaker/> - a great little utility for adding the metadata, chaptering, URLs and images to your podcasts. Also helps you manage podcast series and upload directly to your web space. A free 30-day trial is available. For Mac only.