

The Possibilities of Podcasting

Elizabeth Green Musselman <greenmue@southwestern.edu>

What could you do with a podcast?

- Record lectures (or more informal essays) so that you can share them with life-long learners outside your university, or have your students listen to so that you can devote class time to something else.
- Interview scholars in your field so that their ideas reach a wider audience more quickly.
- Make longer-form, radio-documentary-style pieces. Podcasts do not have to appear regularly or indefinitely. You can record one really great program or series of programs, post that, and then stop.
- Treat your podcast like an audio blog. Record your thoughts about the day's news, the latest scholarship, etc.
- As a final project, have your students research, write and record essays that you will upload to a podcast. (Feel free to e-mail me for my assignment instructions.)
- There are many other possibilities.



My podcast: The Missing Link: A Podcast on the History of Science, Medicine, and Technology
<<http://missinglinkpodcast.com>>

14 monthly, half-hour episodes between August 2007 and September 2008

Audience (as of 14 Oct 2008):

- Average of 1,218 listeners per episode (2,233 for the most popular episode; 17,062 all-time downloads).
- 355 subscribers (these listeners have set it up so that every new episode automatically downloads to their computer)
- Listeners downloading from at least 37 countries. South Africa is the only sub-Saharan African country for which I have documented downloads.
- Voluntary survey, answered by 28 listeners, indicated the listenership had a wide variety of ages and professions (though the largest single number was in education).

Sound equipment used:

Essential:

- Shure SM-58 microphone (\$85)
- Edirol UA-1EX USB audio interface (\$80): connects my mike to my computer and amplifies the sound
- Instead of the above two, you could opt for one of the many good-quality USB headset microphones that are available. You can get one of these for less than \$50.
- Audacity sound editing software (free online at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>)

Nice to have, but not essential:

- Libsyn podcast syndication service (\$60/year): hosts my audio files and creates an RSS feed; can also host your podcast's blog. There are free services that will do this, though you have to run an ad at the start of each episode.
- 5 USB headphone mikes (\$75 altogether): my students use these to record their essays
- Olympus VN960PC voice recorder (\$43) use to record interviews and other on-site audio
- AKG Acoustics K141 studio headphones (\$90): not essential to get this quality, but important to have headphones better than standard earbuds
- CAD EPF-15A Pop Filter & Gooseneck (\$25): cuts the popping sounds. You can make one with a coat hanger and some pantyhose.
- On-Stage DS7100C Round Base Desktop Microphone Stand (\$6.50)

For more information about Web 2.0 and academic scholarship:

- *African Stakeholders Network* (<http://www.unicttaskforce.org/perl/showdoc.pl?area=rn1>): UN task force attempting to bridge digital divide
- *Earideas* (<http://earideas.com/earideas/explore>): “a collection of the best thought-provoking audio available on the web”
- *Gutenberg-e Program* (<http://www.historians.org/PRIZES/gutenberg/index.cfm>): the American Historical Association's attempt to make electronic publishing a viable option for junior historians
- *NEH funding opportunity* (<http://www.h-net.org/announce/show.cgi?ID=162939>): the National Endowment for the Humanities has a funding line for “radio, television, and digital projects in the humanities that are intended for public audiences.”
- *Open Culture* (<http://www.oculture.com/>): blog by Dan Colman, director of Stanford's Continuing Studies program, that “explores cultural and educational media (podcasts, videos, online courses, etc.) that's freely available on the web, and that makes learning dynamic, productive, and fun.”