



Utah Coalition for Educational Technology

An ISTE Affiliate • UCET Member Newsletter for November 2005

UCET 2006 is Looking for Innovative Presentations

Do you have innovative ways you use technology in your classroom, school, or district? Are there technologies you use to communicate better, teach more effectively, manage your work flow more effeciently, or enhance your curriculum?

Would you consider sharing them with the UCET community? We invite you to apply to be a presenter at UCET 2006. You'll find the UCET Presentation Proposal form online at <http://www.ucet.org> in early December. (The UCET website will be undergoing a major revision in November.)

As you know, this sharing of ideas is really the heart and soul of the UCET conference, and the key to its success over the years. We all come away enriched and enthused when great ideas are shared and discussed with our peers, and we look forward to hearing yours. We encourage you to consider applying to be a presenter.



POWER UP!



UCET 2006
South Hills Middle School
March 10-11, 2006

Podcasting in Education

Technologies evolve that have the potential to become effective educational tools, perhaps even revolutionize the learning process. Teachers willing to explore these new frontiers will often find that each additional tool adds to the repertoire of effective and motivational teaching strategies.

This month's issue of the UCET newsletter focuses on an emerging blend of technologies termed podcasting. With the recent advent of portable video devices, even more exciting possibilities exist! We'll explore what podcasting is, how it works, ideas for classroom use, creating your own podcasts, and links to free software that you can use on your Windows PC or Macintosh computer.



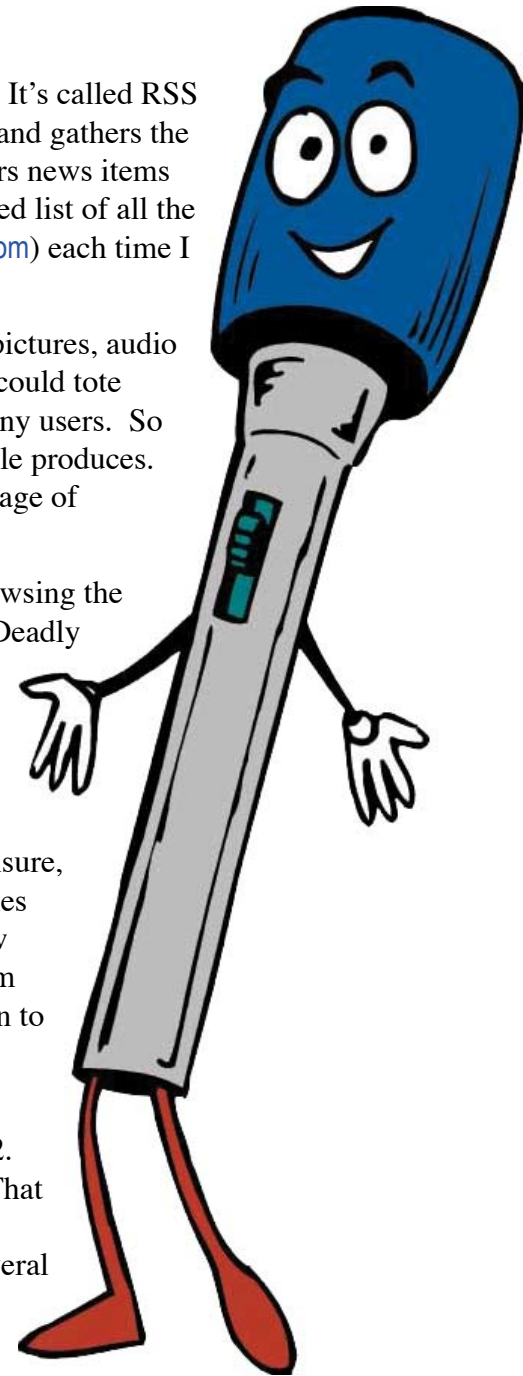
What is a podcast?

A new technology for aggregating information you desire has become prevalent. It's called RSS (for Really Simple Syndication). You define the criteria; your software goes out and gathers the information for you. My web browser, Safari (which supports RSS feeds), gathers news items for me from sites I've subscribed to. For example, my browser will go get a linked list of all the new freeware and shareware posted on VersionTracker (<http://www.versiontracker.com>) each time I go online. This is the power of RSS.

Now let's step further. What if we could take this beyond text, and subscribe to pictures, audio or video? We can. The audio files are typically MP3 files, and the idea that you could tote these on your portable MP3 player and listen to them "on the go" appealed to many users. So they've been nicknamed podcasts, after the ubiquitous iPod MP3 player that Apple produces. However, you don't need an iPod or even Apple's iTunes software to take advantage of podcasting. (More on other podcasting solutions on the next page.)

One way to describe a podcast is to share an experience I had recently. I was browsing the Discovery Channel's website and came across a podcast link for a show called "Deadly Bugs." I copied the podcast's address into my iTunes software and listened to the show - a marvelous half hour science program. (<http://www.discovery.com/radio/podcasts.html>) (<http://www.podcast.net/show/77883>) I was so impressed with it that I clicked on the "subscribe" link in the podcast section of iTunes. I also downloaded many of the previous podcasts from the list of available shows. These MP3 files are downloaded to my computer so I can listen to them at my leisure, whether I am online or not. Since I subscribed to the podcast, the first thing iTunes does when opened is check the Discovery Channel site to see if there are any new editions of the show I haven't downloaded yet, and if there are, it downloads them automatically for me. I often copy them to my portable mp3 player so I can listen to them on the evening bus ride home.

Corey Deitz writes a more succinct definition of a podcast on About.com (<http://About.com>). He says "A Podcast is: 1. An audio file you create in .mp3 format... 2. Which contains your own radio show or any audio you wish others to have... 3. That you upload along with an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) file to a server (your website for instance)... 4. That your intended listeners download using one of several programs that have been created to retrieve your audio file automatically... 5. So they can listen to it at their convenience on their own iPod or .mp3 player."



Where Can I Find the Podcasts?

There are plenty of podcasts out there. Go have a look at some of the podcast directories, such as Podcast.net (<http://www.podcast.net/>), Digital Podcast (<http://www.digitalpodcast.com/>), Yahoo Podcasts (<http://podcasts.yahoo.com/>), and Podcast Alley (<http://www.podcastalley.com/>). Podcasts range from individuals' posting audible daily journals, to nationally syndicated radio shows, to magazines providing an extra service for people on the go. One podcast I've found quite helpful is "A QuickFix from MacFixit.com." (<http://www.podcast.net/show/45731>) These 6-10 minute podcasts, released weekly, talk about software and hardware issues for Macintosh, and solutions to problems people are experiencing with patches, software releases, etc. There are similar podcasts for the Windows side of the fence, too. If you enjoy NPR (National Public Radio), you need to have a look at their podcast page as well. (http://www.npr.org/rss/podcast/podcast_directory.php)



What Software Can I Use to Download and Listen to Podcasts?

Apple iTunes (Free-Mac & PC)

Apple's iTunes is an elegant, free download that allows you to look for, subscribe to, and download podcasts. It also organizes and plays your mp3 music, allows you to burn audio CDs, and much more. This application, for both Windows and Macintosh, has received top awards in the software industry. Of course, Apple is hoping you'll buy music and videos from their iTunes Store as well. Elegantly designed and easy to use, iTunes is a top pick.

Download: (<http://www.apple.com/itunes/download/>)



iPodder (Free-Mac, PC, or Linux)

iPodder is a free, opensource program available for multiple platforms. Most reviews I read said the program is easy to use and does what it advertises: "It allows users to select and download shows and music and to play whenever they want on their iPods, portable digital media players, or computers automatically, after specifying which music or shows they want to listen to."

Download: (<http://ipodder.sourceforge.net/index.php>)



@Podder (Free-Windows)

There is lots of podcasting software available. (see http://www.podcastingnews.com/topics/Podcast_Software.html) This one was a good one to show for podcasting's potential as a resource for visually impaired people. @Podder is an evolving podcast receiver designed especially for visually impaired listeners. aPodder.org distributes and enhances @Podder. They invite you to join their community of developers, listeners, and supporters to realize the potential of podcasting for that audience.

Download: (<http://www.apodder.org/>)



Want even more information on Podcasting???

Podcasting News is a site that serves as a directory, a user forum, and an RSS news feed about podcasting. It's a good starting point for exploring podcasts. (<http://www.podcastingnews.com/>) Wikipedia also has an excellent and detailed article on podcasting that you'll want to read. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcast>)

How Do I Create My Own Podcast?

Podcasts are quite easy to create. All you need is a microphone, a software application that allows you to edit sound and save it as an MP3 file, and a little pre-planning. Rather than reinvent the wheel, I'm going to share with you an excellent tutorial by Corey Deitz at About.com.

How to Create Your Own Podcast - A Step-by-Step Tutorial

<http://radio.about.com/od/podcastin1/a/aa030805a.htm?terms=tutorial+podcast>

In the tutorial he shares the following information...

1. How to record your audio and save it to an .mp3 file.
2. How to create an RSS file which holds the "directions" for sending your file when a user's program like iPodder requests it
3. How to write the "directions" that are inside the RSS file
4. How to upload the RSS "feed" and your .mp3 file
5. How to validate that the file is written correctly and will send the file correctly.

Teacher Treasure! Audacity - Free Sound Editing and Recording Program...

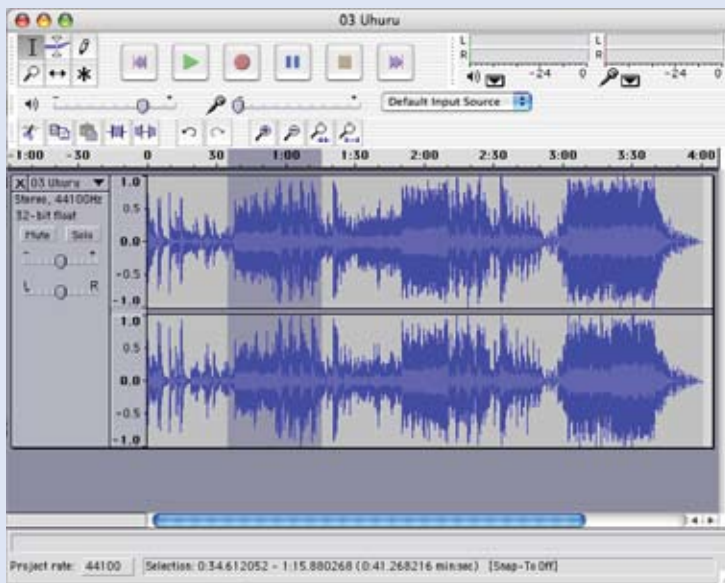
Most of the tutorials I found on Podcasting recommend Audacity as the software tool to use to record, edit, and save your podcast as an MP3 file. I heartily agree - I've been using Audacity for years. Available for most platforms, Audacity is a free download. You can download the program at

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download/>

In order to save your files as MP3, you'll need to download the LAME MP3 encoders - also a free download.

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/help/faq?s=install&i=lame-mp3>

Once you've downloaded the LAME library file, I suggest you put it into the Audacity folder. The first time you try to save as an MP3 from the FILE menu, Audacity will ask you to locate the LAME file. Then you're set to go. Happy podcasting!



Ideas for Classroom Use

The ways you can use podcasting in your classroom is limited only by your creativity. Here are a few ideas to get you started...

1. A brief summary of the day - a daily podcast that summarizes each day's objectives, assignments, activities, and challenges. Parents could subscribe to keep current on what's happening in your classroom.
2. Record your presentations/lectures so students can review what was taught.
3. Have students do a cooperative project where the final presentation will be a podcast.
4. Teach a second language. Many instructors are using podcasts as a way to help their student master a second language.
5. Assign students to listen to podcasts that supplement or enhance concepts being taught in the classroom.

Dennis Dunleavy: "I think the technology of podcasting can best benefit learning by allowing education to become even more portable than ever. Podcasting cannot replace the classroom but it is one more way to meeting students where they live -- on the Internet and on iPods. I think of all this technology as supplemental to the classroom experience and interaction with professors. The technology can best be utilized in education by figuring out how students learn best in a digital information-rich society."

Feedback Please...

Ideas, comments, suggestions?
Please write me anytime at...

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