Podcasting in the School Library Media Center Part 1:
Integrating Podcasts and Vodcasts into Teaching and Learning
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Listen to Thomas Jefferson's rough draft of the Declaration of Independence.
Learn about Jefferson's passion for music by listening to his favorites works.
Hear how Europeans viewed Americans in the late 18th Century.

These are three podcasts available from the **Monticello: Home of Thomas Jefferson** website. A growing number of Internet resources are offering multimedia communications as a way to bring history, literature, science, and other topics alive for their visitors. While some students enjoy reading text as a way to access information, a growing number of young people prefer a multimedia approach. In addition to motivating learners, podcasts are also a way to convey ideas and emotions that are difficult to express in a text format.

Discovering Podcasts

The word podcasting comes from combining the words "ipod" and "broadcasting." What distinguishes a podcast from other multimedia files distributed on the Internet is the addition of a web feed that allows users to subscribe to the audio program. In other words, rather than having to visit a website to determine whether new content is available, files are automatically accessed and organized by a feed aggregator such as **Bloglines** for immediate enjoyment. Although some people use tools such as **iTunes** to download media files to their iPod or another portable MP3 player, many users listen to podcasts on their computer.

With increasing bandwidth, the availability of easy-to-use video editing tools, and the introduction of the video iPod, many podcasters are now offering video podcasts also known as vodcasts.

Because most blog services provide built-in web feeds, many people have chosen this format for their podcasts using each posting as an individual episode. These are often called audioblogs or vlogs.

Although any aggregator can be used to download podcasts, some people prefer a reader designed specifically for audio feeds. For example, many people use iTunes for their podcasts because the files are downloaded in the background and are ready whenever the user wants to listen. On the other hand, some people use a podcast directory and download the files as they use them.

Selecting Quality Podcasts

Podcasts have become the popular new way to share content on the Internet, so it's easy to become overwhelmed by the thousands of choices. As you begin reviewing these audio programs, use your school library's selection policy as a guide. Although you'll be able to find many quality podcasts, only a few will really address the needs of your learners.

Learner Needs. With so many options, it's important to begin with your information need. Look at your selection policy and content area standards. Where are the information needs? Also, think about those information areas that are difficult to express through text communications or learning outcomes where there's a need to differentiate instruction.

As you explore podcasts, look for the intended audience. For example, the **Bobby Bucket** website specifically states that the podcasts are aimed at kids, parents, and readers of all ages. Listeners will enjoy book reviews, author interviews, reading tips, and other related topics.

Content Quality. Seek out podcasts that capitalize on the audio feature by providing dynamic dialog, interesting sound effects, and musical elements that will engage learners. They should hold the attention of listeners and motive them to ask questions, practice, or take action.

Since anyone with a microphone and access to the web can create a podcast, it's important to consider the authority of the author. Many interesting programs lack credibility when they fail to distinguish fact from opinion or provide inadequate citations.

The **BBC: In Our Time** podcast investigates the history of ideas in areas such as culture, philosophy, and science. One program examines Homer's *Odyssey* in shaping western ideas. The podcast is produced by a well-known organization and is presented by experts in this field.

Technical Quality. Since the focus of podcasts is audio, look for quality sound elements. Also consider the size of the files and the ease of using the web feeds for downloading.

Currently, most podcasts are produced in the MP3 format and are easy to use. However the technical quality of the files vary. Some programs are poorly edited causing concerns regarding sound quality, volume control, and other issues that may interfere with their use.

Design Quality. Consider the usability of the podcast. Although a program may have good content, it may be difficult to use. For instance some programs are lengthy making it difficult to use only a short segment without editing the work. Look for short, single concept programs that it will be easy for students and teachers to use such as programs that are part of a series.

Instructional Quality. Many podcasts provide scripts, study guides, and other supplemental materials. Look for resources that provide effective guiding questions and engaging, authentic activities for students. The **ESL and Archie Comics** website includes an Archie comic strip and learning guide along with each podcast.

Check out Kathy Schrock's **Evaluation of Podcasts** checklist for more ideas on evaluating podcasts.

Exploring Podcasts

From poetry readings to language learning, there are endless possibilities for audio blogging and podcasting in learning. Many radio programs translate well to the online environment. For example, NPR's programs such as **This American Life** and **Living On Earth** are great examples of quality programming.

Podcasters provides a wide variety of programming formats and content. Let's explore a few of the options.

Collaborative Projects. Consider podcasts that have interactive components. Some websites invite listeners a way to submit comments or participate in local or global projects. For instance, podcasting could be used to share audio projects created by reading buddies. These programs provide students with an authentic audience for their work and the opportunity to work as a team toward a joint goal.

The **Our City** project asks students from around the globe to submit a recording about the city where they live.

Current Events. Most news sources are now producing podcasts. **CNN** provides both audio and video podcasts. Current events for young people can be found on **Scholastic** podcasts. Seek out news sources in particular subject areas such as the **Stone Pages** archaeological news podcast.

Government Documents. Many standards require students to understand well-known documents and interpret primary source materials. Since these works are often difficult for students to understand, audio provides a different format to help students learn from the text.

From the Declaration of Independence to the Federalist Paper, many podcasting sites such as **Americana Phonic** are sharing audio recordings of primary source documents as well as classic works of fiction.

Interviews. Students enjoy listening to the experiences of experts in content area fields. A podcast by a **NASA** scientist can reinforce

concepts, provide personal examples, and generate interest in current science events.

The Barnes and Noble website sponsors a **Meet the Writers Podcast**. Visitors can download the audio interviews and get updates through an email subscription.

Issues. Some podcasts focus on advocacy or commentary providing political statements, persuasive messages, opinions, or specific perspectives. Although these are useful, it's important that students understand the difference between fact and opinion. These websites are useful in helping students make comparisons among different points of view and develop arguments for debates.

Podcasts can provide unique perspectives or thought-provoking discussions. The **Geography for Travelers** podcast discusses the issue of whether people be allowed to climb Ayers Rock in the Outback of Australia. This podcast would provide a great introduction to issues related to recreation, public lands, and the impact of humans.

Lessons. Some podcasts such as language lessons and "how to" projects are specifically designed for instruction. These programs often provide support materials in addition to the audio programs.

The **Bob and Rob Show** provides weekly English lessons including both a podcast and a study guide.

Programs. Many radio and television programs are now available as podcasts. News programs such as NBC's **Meet the Press** and many of National Public Radio's programming are available in this format. From hurricanes to mummies, **NOVA** is a well-known PBS program is now producing short audio stories on science topics.

In addition to news and nonfiction works, you'll find many websites with prose, poetry and storytelling programs. **Storynory** is a source for audio stories for children. Each week a new story is added to the collection.

Reviews. One of the most popular uses of podcasts is critical review of books, television, movies, and games. Many websites provide reviews of children's books by individuals and librarians. Look for the podcasts produced by publishers such as **Penguin Group** for author interviews and book excerpts.

Virtual Tours. For decades, audio tours have been a mainstay for museum. This approach is now being translated into the virtual format by museums such as the **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.**

The podcasts from the **San Diego Zoo** can be used two ways. If you can't go to the zoo, you can have a virtual experience. Or, if you can go to the zoo with your iPod, it's like having a personal guide walk with you as you visit the exhibits.

Locating Podcasts

With thousands of podcasts being generated daily and few good search tools, it can be difficult to locate quality programming for young people. A few search tools are designed specifically for locating podcasts. For example, **Podzinger** searches for video and audios with RSS feeds.

You'll quickly become disappointed using traditional search engines to locate podcasts. However if you have a specific topic in mind, consider doing a search for your topic and adding the words "podcast", "podcasting", or "RSS" in your search.

If you know a good website and wonder if a podcast is available, do a site search for "podcast" and it's likely that you'll find a page with podcast instructions.

An effective way to begin your exploration is to use one of the educational directories to podcasts such as **Podcast Directory for Educators** or the **Education Podcast Network**. You may also have success search the education area or content fields in **iTunes Directory, Podcast Alley**, or **Yahoo Podcasts**.

Organizing Podcasts for Student Use

Once you've identified podcasts you wish to add to your school library collection, it's time to design an efficient and effective method of storing and accessing these resources. You also need a plan for continuously seeking and exploring podcasts as you mine for new resources.

As you select a podcast, think about whether you want to monitor the podcast over time or simply wish to select a particular program of interest. Also think about how students and teachers will be using the resources. This will help determine how you might access the resource.

Podcasting Aggregator. If you plan to come back to the resource over time, it's a good idea to add the web feed to your web aggregator such as **Bloglines**. These tools provide a way to organize feeds into folders for easy access by topic and subject area. Then, you can check the resource regularly for new podcasts of interest. The advantage of a web-based aggregator such as **Bloglines** is that it can be accessed from any computer with Internet access.

Podcasts for language instruction are particularly popular. For example, the **ESL Pod** provides audio as well as learning guides. Since new lessons are constantly being posted, it's a good idea to add this podcast to your web aggregator so you can get the updates.

Pathfinders and Web Links. In some cases you may identify a specific podcast that meets a particular learning standard. In this case you may simply link to the online resource as part of a web-based pathfinder containing other quality resources on that topic.

Downloading Podcasts. An increasing number of school districts are designing intranet systems for storing and sharing multimedia files. You may want to download podcasts on your network server and organize them for use by students and teachers. You could also download selected files for use on iPods and other MP3 players that can be checked out from the library. Although some podcasts have restrictions on use, most allow downloads for educational use. The

advantage of downloading files is that you can continue to use the media file even if the website is no longer available.

The **Kedou Kids Pod** provides great stories that are divided into short chapters that could be downloaded to an MP3 player for checkout.

Integrating Podcasts into the Curriculum

Before infusing podcasts into your lessons, focus on the learning outcome. What's the value of the audio medium? How does the podcast fit with other learning resources? How can it be used to differentiate learning for individual students?

A student who has difficulty reading in the content areas may find podcasts as a way to access high-quality information. For example, **Earth and Sky** is a radio program with excellent science content.

There are applications of podcasting across the curriculum. Use the following examples as you start partnering with teachers on potential uses of podcasts.

Communication Arts. Focus on assignments that ask students to be active listeners and demonstrate their listening skills. The short audio articles at **Reader's Digest RD Outload** would work well for this type of assignment. Keep in mind that some podcasts are available in multiple languages such as **Science@NASA** offering both English and Spanish.

Fine Arts. With many museums developing podcasts, explore opportunities for children to go on virtual field trips and discuss works of art.

Health and Fitness. From sports stories to health information, podcasts provide easy-to-understand information on popular topics. **Family Health Radio** provides 2 ½ minute audio programs on over 500 topics. After listening to a few podcasts, ask students to generate a list of questions about a topic for further investigation.

Math. The **MathGrad** podcast is a series of audio programs that discuss specific, real-world applications of math through topics such as maps, voting, scale, and probability. Ask students to create their on podcast on a math topic.

Science. Look for podcasts that discuss practical applications of science. The **Jefferson Lab** and **New Scientist** magazine both provide news articles and interviews on current issues.

Social Studies. The **Colonial Williamsburg** website provides podcasts on historical topics along with a transcript and web links. Interpreters are used to put students in the time period. For example, students can listen to a re-enactment of Thomas Jefferson reading the Declaration of Independence or a brickmaker or wigmaker discussing their trade.

Conclusion

Like cassettes, audio CDs, and DVDs, podcasts provide yet another powerful media to enhance the informational and instructional resources of your school library media collection. As you explore the many quality audio and video materials available through the Internet, search for innovative ways to facilitate their use through organization of podcast web feeds, creation of pathfinders, and the introduction of iPods and other MP3 devices in your library.

To explore the podcasts discussed in this article, go to our Bloglines at http://www.bloglines.com/public/eduscapes

References

Schrock, Kathy (2006). **Evaluation of Podcasts**. Available: http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/evalpodcast.html

Podcast Directories

Education Podcast Network
http://epnweb.org/

iTunes Directory

http://www.apple.com/itunes/download/

Podcast Alley
http://www.podcastalley.com/podcast_genres.php?pod_genre_id=7

Podcast Directory for Educators
http://recap.ltd.uk/podcasting/

Podzinger
http://www.podzinger.com/

Yahoo Podcasts
http://podcasts.yahoo.com/

Resources

Americana Phonic
http://www.americanaphonic.com/

Barnes and Noble Podcast
http://www.barnesandnoble.com/writers/

BBC In Our Time
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/

Bob and Rob Show
http://englishcaster.com/bobrob/

Bobby Bucket Podcasts
http://bobbybucket.blogspot.com/

Colonial Williamsburg
http://www.history.org/media/podcasts.cfm

CNN Podcast
http://www.cnn.com/services/podcasting/

Earth and Sky
http://www.earthsky.org/Kids/

EarthWatch Radio
http://ewradio.org/

ESL and Archie Comics
http://www.archiecomics.com/podcasts/

ESL Pod
http://www.eslpod.com/

Family Health Radio
http://fhradio.org/

Geography for Travelers
http://travelgeography.libsyn.com/

Jefferson Lab
http://www.jlab.org/rss/podcast.html

Kedou Kids Pod
http://www.jtwgroup.com/podcast.htm

Living on Earth
http://www.loe.org/

Meet the Press from MSNBC
http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3032608/

MathGrad
http://www.mathgrad.com/

Monticello Podcasts
http://www.monticello.org/podcasts/

NASA Pocasting
http://www.nasa.gov/help/rssnpodcast/

New Scientist
http://www.newscientist.com/podcast.ns

Our City Podcast
http://learninginhand.com/OurCity/

Popular Mechanics
http://www.popularmechanics.com/rss/

Reader's Digest
http://www.rd.com/

San Diego Zoo
http://www.sandiegozoo.org/podcast/

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
http://www.sfmoma.org/education/edu_podcasts.html

Scholastic Podcasts
http://content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=7692

Science at NASA
http://science.nasa.gov/

Stone Pages
http://www.stonepages.com/news/

Storynory
http://storynory.com/

Bloglines

Add | Edit | Options

📁 *132 feeds*   Mark All Read

⊞ 📁 **Starters** (22)

⊞ 📁 **Authors & Literature for Young Adult** (120)

⊟ 📁 **Audblogs & Podcasting** (662)

  📄 **Americana Phonic** (10)

  ✊ **Archaeology Channel** (7)

  ▦ **The Bob and Rob Show** (8)

  🅑 **Bobby Bucket Podcasts** (13)

  🅑 **Book Voyages** (9)

  ③ **CBC Radio 3 Podcast** (1)

  📄 **Cefn Fforest Primary Podcast** (17)

  🅑 **ColeyCast** (9)

  📄 **Colonial Williamsburg's What's New** (3)

  ▦ **DreamExtreme Podcast** (15)

  📄 **Earthwatch Radio** (10)

  📄 **English as a Second Language Podcast** (200)

  📄 **Every Object Tells A Story**

Posted on: Mon, Mar 13 2006 4:09 AM | Email This | Clip/Blog This | Keep New:

Costume Gallery in 1911

Timeless Fashion: Senior Archivist Christopher Marsden is transported back to 1911 and the Costume Gallery of the Victoria and Albert Museum, as part of the Every Object Tells A Story project.

Enclosure

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Biba Poster

Biba Babe: Archivist Alexia Bleathman revisits the iconic sixties brand of Biba in the archives of the Victoria and Albert Museum, as part of the Every Object Tells A Story project.

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Posted on: Mon, Mar 13 2006 4:09 AM | Email This | Clip/Blog This | Keep New: ☐

William Morris Letter

Art Referee: Senior Archivist Christopher Marsden finds a