

## InfoTech Column

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### Podcasting: the Short Course

Podcasting is hot. Very hot. It's cool too. Everyone has heard about it and many have tried it. There must be some library applications and there are. This month's column explores this fun and useful technology.

When is a podcast not a podcast? That's easy – when it's simply an MP3 file. Many of us have gone to a website and listened to or downloaded an MP3 file. That's good, but it's just not a podcast. A podcast is syndicated audio content. Essentially MP3 files are linked to RSS and listeners can 'subscribe'. A VODcast is another new word. That's syndicated video content (VOD is video on demand). These new words arose as part of the iPod revolution but the Apple iPod device isn't necessary to play. Any PC and most MP3 players can use podcasts – a term that's become as generic as Kleenex™.

So now we know that podcasts are not just MP3 files posted on a website for playing or downloading. A podcast is defined by Wikipedia as a method of publishing files to the Internet, allowing users to subscribe to a feed *and* receive new files automatically by subscription, usually at no cost. It first became popular in late 2004, and was used largely for audio files. To oversimplify, a podcast is essentially an MP3 file that has an RSS feed. Syndication is easy to understand when you think about Dear Abby's or Ann Landers' columns. These columns are written in one physical place and syndicated for publication throughout hundreds of newspapers. This is the same concept as RSS - really simple syndication. The definition of broadcast is changing too. It no longer means just sending out your signal on your channel through the air or cable. It can also mean user-customized feeds of digital content in the form of sound or video. It's also possible to syndicate software, blogs, news feeds, and other digital content. This is a whole new world – again.

This opens up new opportunities for learning, alerting and, of course, entertainment. Here are a few ideas that some innovative libraries and institutions are already trying:

- Record and podcast lectures at university or colleges.
- Record and podcast conference sessions and offer them for non-attendees or added value for delegates
- Record podcasts for distribution to users
- Subscribe to podcasts on topics or domains of interest to you
- Time shift programs that you like (such as NPR's Future Tense) and listen when it's convenient.
- Offer training through on demand podcasts

- Record local history and offer it for listening to users.

How does this fit into my working life? It's quite simple really. With a podcast you can:

- Learn while you commute in your car. All it takes is a simple USB drive in your car radio or a docking station for your MP3 player and speakers or a connection to your car's speakers. Don't use your ear buds, it's just not safe.
- Learn while you commute by bus, train or subway. Ignore those other riders and add hours of learning per week to your downtime travels. You can mix it up with favorite tunes too.
- Learn while you exercise. Listen to updates and courses while you workout at the gym, ride your bike or jog. You'll be healthier and smarter!
- Learn while you eat. Take a restful lunch. Take your brown bag to the park or lunchroom and listen to an enjoyable podcast and some tunes.
- Record some training ideas and podcast them to your co-workers. Record your notes for a speech or memo.

A side benefit is that most (nearly all for now) podcasts are free. Some do include a few ads or at least sponsorship announcements. The quality range is wide but most have something that's good to learn and you choose. If you love NPR or PBS or other favorite programs you can often now subscribe and time shift your listening. You now have the opportunity to listen to what you want and need to hear rather than just what's on. A guilty pleasure with these devices is that you can now time shift *Desperate Housewives* and *Lost* too for a small fee! It must be getting big because NBC alone has revenue over \$2.5 million already in this new mode.

We are seeing a few new search engines for podcasts too. So, if you're hankering for learning about libraries, RSS, streaming media, library 2.0, AJAX, or even podcasting itself, you can search for what's out there.

**Podscope** finds podcasts through its search engine. You can search for topics you want and find it through the metadata on each file. It's not that accurate yet and there is a poor recall/relevance ratio but you can see the potential for finding podcasts that meet your needs. I searched "librarian" and found a few interesting files but there were quite a few false drops. I searched "Google Print" and turned up quality podcasts from Future Tense, Search Engine Watch's Daily Searchcast and BusinessWeek.

**Podzinger** searches the spoken word in podcasts. This means it doesn't just search the metadata (indexes and catalogs) but searches the actual words in the 'cast. It's my favourite right now and it gives a much more satisfying result on the search for "librarian". It still didn't pull up some of the ones that I might have expected but the scrape of podcasts will grow, I'm sure. I am getting the same

feeling in Podzinger that I got searching the early days of spoken word searching that I got when I shifted from AltaVista to Google. Interesting, eh?

I've included a list of podcast directories and search engines in the sidebar. Podcasters must register their podcasts with most directories and search engines. I hope that this barrier disappears soon.

By searching Podzinger using a simple search "libraries", I discovered a series at UniversityTech.net that covers libraries and other academic issues. By searching "Google" I found loads of interesting discussion and talk shows. Search response, as usual, gets better with more specificity. I searched "Google Print" and found quite a few podcasts by thought leaders. Play with it and see what you find.

As SLA's Click University adds more podcasts we have a real opportunity here to learn faster, stronger and better. As they become exposed to the world through podcasting and podcast search engines and directories we can get our good products and messages out to the rest of the world too.

The world of information and knowledge is now well and truly beyond the world of text in containers like books, articles and webpages. It's now easily acquirable in spoken word and video too. That's very cool and exciting. Playing with this kind of stuff in the early stages prepares us as information professionals for the world as it evolves.

*Stephen Abram, MLS is Vice President, Innovation, for SirsiDynix. He is an SLA Fellow and the past president of the Ontario Library Association and the immediate past president of the Canadian Library Association. In June 2003 he was awarded SLA's John Cotton Dana Award. This column contains Stephen's personal perspectives and does not necessarily represent the opinions or positions of SirsiDynix. Stephen would love to hear from you at [stephen.abram@sirsidynix.com](mailto:stephen.abram@sirsidynix.com).*

## **Sidebar:**

### **Podcast Search Engines and Directories**

#### ***Audio and Video Search***

SingingFish

<http://search.singingfish.com/sfw/home.jsp>

Potkast

<http://www.potkast.com>  
Podscope  
<http://www.podscope.com/>  
Blogdigger  
<http://www.blogdigger.com/>  
Loomia  
<http://www.loomia.com/>  
GoFish  
[http://gofish.com/...](http://gofish.com/)  
blinkx Podcast and Video Directory  
<http://www.blinkx.tv/>  
Podzinger  
<http://www.podzinger.com>  
iTunes  
<http://www.apple.com/itunes/>

### ***Directories***

Podcast Alley  
<http://www.podcastalley.com/index.php>  
Podcast.net  
<http://www.podcast.net/>  
BlogUniverse Podcast Directory  
<http://www.bloguniverse.com/>  
Digital Podcast  
<http://www.digitalpodcast.com/>  
Syndic8 Podcasts  
<http://www.syndic8.com/podcasts/>  
AllPodcasts  
<http://www.allpodcasts.com/>  
Penguin Radio  
<http://www.penguinradio.com/podcasting/>  
PodcastHost  
<http://podcasthostcom/>  
Podcast Bunker  
<http://www.podcastbunker.com/>  
Gigadial  
<http://www.gigadial.net/>  
OpenPodcast  
<http://www.openpodcast.org/>  
Pocketcasting  
<http://www.pocketcasting.com/>  
Podcast Pickle  
<http://www.podcastpickle.com/>  
Podcast Directory

<http://www.podcastdirectory.com>  
PublicRadioFan  
<http://www.publicradiofan.com/podcasts.html>  
Podfeeder  
<http://www.podfeeder.com/>  
Podfeed  
<http://www.podfeed.net/>  
Open Media Network  
<http://www.omn.org/>  
Podcasting Station  
<http://www.podcasting-station.com/index.php>  
podSites.com  
<http://podsites.com/index.cfm>  
PLAZOO  
<http://www.plazoo.com/>  
Podcasting News  
<http://www.podcastingnews.com/>  
PodcastShuffle  
<http://www.podcastshuffle.com/>  
IdiotVox  
<http://www.idiotvox.com/>  
BlogExplosion Podcast Directory  
<http://www.blogexplosion.com/podcast/>  
Feedzie - Podcast Directory  
[http://www.feedzie.com/feedzie\\_podcasts.php](http://www.feedzie.com/feedzie_podcasts.php)  
iTunes Podcast Directory  
<http://www.apple.com/podcasting/>  
Blast Podcast  
<http://www.blastpodcast.com/>  
NPR Podcast Directory Beta  
<http://www.npr.org/rss/podcast/podcast...>  
EveryPodcast.com  
<http://www.everypodcast.com/>  
Yahoo! Podcasts Beta  
<http://podcasts.yahoo.com/>  
LearnOutLoud.com  
<http://www.LearnOutLoud.com/>  
Get A Podcast  
<http://www.getapodcast.com/>  
Sahfor  
<http://www.sahfor.com/>  
PodNova  
<http://www.podnova.com/>  
podcasts.feedster.com  
<http://podcasts.feedster.com/>  
PodBlaze

http://www.podblaze.com/  
Feeds2Read.Net  
http://feeds2read.net/  
Podcast Empire  
http://www.podcastempire.com/  
Fresh Podcasts  
http://freshpodcasts.com/  
MyPodcastCenter  
http://www.mypodcastcenter.com/  
podcasterworld.com  
http://podcasterworld.com/  
Podcast Pup  
http://www.podcastpup.com/

**Learning more about podcasts by reading:**

The Podcast Creation Guide can be accessed at:

<http://images.apple.com/education/solutions/podcasting/pdf/PodcastCreationGuide.pdf>

The Podcast Backbone Guide can be accessed at:

<http://images.apple.com/education/solutions/podcasting/pdf/PodcastBackboneGuide.pdf>

Duke University iPod First-Year Experience: Final Evaluation Report

[http://cit.duke.edu/pdf/ipod\\_initiative\\_04\\_05.pdf](http://cit.duke.edu/pdf/ipod_initiative_04_05.pdf)