

Chapter XLIII

Podcasting and Vodcasting in Education and Training

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ABSTRACT

On the cutting edge of current technologies are portable media, where users can download information and take it with them to digest it anytime, anywhere. Some of the newest ways of sharing portable information using the Internet are podcasting and vodcasting. Podcasts are a distribution of audio files such as radio programs or music videos, over the web. A derivative of the term (and idea) of podcast is “vodcast,” also commonly referred to as a video podcast. A vodcast functions in much the same way as a podcast, except that instead of users downloading only audio files, they also download corresponding video files to their portable media players. While one might think that podcasting and vodcasting have the ability to revolutionize education and training, these advances are not stand-alone panaceas. However they do offer an incredible educational advantage in that their multimedia aspects attend to a variety of learning needs.

INTRODUCTION

In the today’s world, we are bombarded by information all the time. Television, radio, news-

papers, magazines, journals, the Internet, and many more venues transmit information to us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Most of these forms of media are restricted to the particular formats

in which they have been traditionally transmitted. Television is an audio/visual medium, radio is audio, newspaper is print and pictures and, in its inception, the Internet was primarily text and graphics. However, over the last several years this has begun to change. Information was and is being conveyed via the Internet in a variety of multimedia formats. Most news websites, commercial sites, databases, fan sites, etc. offer information in text, pictures, and/or audio/video. While this type of information is free and legal, it does constrain a user to being at a computer terminal with an Internet connection. On the cutting edge of this information blitz is portable media, where users can download information and take it with them to digest it anytime, anywhere. One of the most publicized ways of sharing portable information over the Internet is the highly controversial peer-to-peer file sharing.

Peer-to-peer file sharing is when users exchange files, most popularly music, over the Internet by either uploading or downloading files from individual terminals. In theory, these files are supposed to be copyright free so as not to have legal ramifications. However, as we know from recent and consistent media coverage of this practice, most peer-to-peer file sharers exchange popular, copy written music because it is an inexpensive way to obtain it. Fortunately, many news, television, and radio programs, as well as independent artists, have become savvy to the popularity of free, downloadable, portable information and entertainment. Recently, media outlets like these have been creating and uploading regular audio or audio/video programs that are often free and always legal to download from the host websites. This type of downloadable, portable, programming is called Podcasting, for strictly audio shows, or Vodcasting, for audio/video shows.

Coinciding with the innovation of these media, a host of legal, ethical, and moral issues arise. When intellectual property and artistic creations become portable, who controls the flow or release of these media? Should information be download-

ed for profit, or should it be free? Is it reasonable to have media available for downloading without restrictions? The creation of podcasting and vodcasting incites unique questions about the ethical use, development, and diffusion of innovative technologies. Because these media are still in their infancy, there are no clear answers to the host of questions their use creates. However, practical use and academic literature do offer some guidance on both the concepts of podcasting and vodcasting, and the ethical implications surrounding their use.

PODCASTS/VODCASTS AND THE LITERATURE

While the phenomena of podcasting and vodcasting are fairly recent, there have been some academic literature and research published on these mediums as a tool to aid in teaching and learning in the classroom. Much of this literature was written by educators who have chosen to employ podcasting and/or vodcasting in their classrooms. Other articles and studies were composed by technology professionals that chose to examine podcasting and vodcasting in terms of education.

Duke University made headlines and history in August 2004 when it handed out 20GB Apple® iPod devices to over 1,600 incoming students. The Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) at Duke evaluated the educational benefits of the devices basing their findings on student and faculty feedback. The findings showed that podcasts created benefits for students such as flexible access to media, better support for individual learners and promoted student interest in the classroom. There was also less reliance on physical materials for faculty as well as students (Belanger, 2005). Not all schools freely give out tools for creating and listening to podcasts, but as Zeynel Cebeci and Mehmet Tekdal point out in their study of audio learning, many students already own mp3 players capable of playing downloaded podcasts

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