

Podcasting: A Significant Addition to your Teaching Toolbox

Hyperlinks to: Why Use Podcasts? Podcasting Technology; More Podcasting Options: Software; Some Helpful Hints and Tips; BU Music Library; Parting Thoughts

A Bit of Background from Michael Stephans

About ten years ago while updating my musician's website, I toyed with the idea of adding a link to a series of original podcasts which would serve as my intended blog – one which would focus upon enhancing listening skills and would stress the importance of experiencing music physically at its point of origin; in other words, “live” in addition to YouTube, streaming, and the more modes of listening. However, my idea had to be a dream deferred once I began writing my first book on jazz.

The podcast idea popped up again a half-dozen winters ago when heavy snowfall made it impossible to travel from Stroudsburg to Bloomsburg. After a few clunky missteps and the help of our Instructional Media and Design Center, I began podcasting during weather events, which were thankfully few and far between.

In recent years, the process of recording and uploading podcasts onto the D2L platform (BOLT) has become much easier due to new and accessible technologies. And I was able to use these to good effect the last half of our Spring semester this year in my Technical Writing classes. In combination with videos, links to PPTs, resource guides, emails, and of course other BOLT tools, my podcasts were pared down roughly 30-minute summaries which included analyses and examples of compositional structures (the latter introduced in the “Resources and Guides” section on BOLT), and explanations of writing exercises as well as each's relevance to practical applications in the workplace. I also used videos of varying lengths for announcements, as well as intermittent messages letting students know I was with them every step of the way and as near as their phones if they needed to email me any time during the day or early evening. The next step, for me, will be to add discussion boards into the mix and to extend the use of Zoom in order to meet with small groups to assist them with group writing projects. In short, I came to realize that podcasts are most effective when combined with these other methods of information delivery, in terms of keeping students engaged and motivated.

Why Use Podcasts?

Podcasts are easy to stream and a familiar media format. They can be used when visual representations are not crucial to the information (or you can direct students to additional resources in BOLT or a website). Some podcasts are as short as a song while others may last up to one hour. The length of your podcast should be matched to the goals and knowing that students working memory can be easily overloaded.

Remember that **hearing-impaired audiences** will need an alternative transcript. The easiest way to create a transcript, especially if the podcast is short: open the notes app on your smart phone, play the audio into your smart phone's mic, and the text will type. Clean up the voice-to-text language, then save as a word file that you can disseminate with the podcast link, or embed in your BOLT module.

Read more about a variety of disciplinary uses for podcasts by [Tomorrow's Professor Blog at Stanford University \(Message 1026\)](#).

When might you use a podcast?

- Share class expectations at the beginning of the semester
- Explain a class assignment
- Class lectures
- Offer supplemental information
- Record class discussions (with student permission)
- Share an outsider's expert advice
- Review homework problems
- Address Frequently Asked Questions

Podcasting Technology

There are a number of distinct ways to record a podcast. One way is to use an external device, e.g. a digital recorder, and others include to select and use podcasting software, and the other approach is to use your smartphone's voice recording app. Each method has the potential to be very effective, depending largely upon which way you wish to proceed, and at the end of the day, how patient you are when learning how to maneuver through step-by-step guidelines.

Podcast Option: The Digital Recorder

Sometimes called the digital audio recorder, this handheld device is relatively easy to use. While most of these recorders offer a variety of recording and editing options, you should concentrate initially on the recording function and get to the more involved stuff later. There are many types of digital recorders on the market. Prices of some of the most highly rated brands and models range from \$46 to \$250 and up, depending on how many bells and whistles you think you might want. For example, here are three highly rated models:



EVISTR 8GB L53-1531536KPBS
(approximately \$50)



TASCAM DR-05X
(approximately \$90)



ROLAND RO-07
(approximately \$150.00)

Michael Stephan notes: "Roughly the size of a deck of cards, the Roland has been my preference. I encourage you to do some research on your own in order to find the device that best suits your needs and budget. I have used this recorder for all podcasts, concerts [Michael is an accomplished drummer], and lectures and can attest to its quality." Purely as an example, here are the simplified steps to recording and uploading a podcast, using the Roland:

- Power ON.
- Choose recording preferences and general settings as listed in the manual.
- Press MENU twice to return to the main screen.
- As you adjust the recording level, be sure to keep the recorder reasonably close to you for optimal volume in playback. As a test, press (●) to adjust the level of the sound of your speaking voice.
- Begin recording / Press STOP (■) when finished.
- Use headphones or an external speaker to review recording.
- Your podcast has now been stored on Roland's SD Card

Uploading the Podcast into Your Computer:

- Assuming that your computer does not have a built-in card reader, you will need a small external card reader (pictured here).
- Similar to other devices, the Roland digital recorder has a removable SD card which is located on in a slot on top of the unit. You simply remove the card from the slot by pressing down gently on the card which releases it from the slot.
- Now remove the SD card, insert it into the appropriate slot in the card reader and plug the USB cable into the computer's USB port. Once you've uploaded your podcast, you may then add it to a Documents folder (or perhaps a folder that you create specifically for podcasts) on your computer.



Publishing or Releasing Your Podcast

Your next step is to decide if you will upload directly to BOLT to distribute to students, or will you make use of software that allows for the editing and publication of podcasts outside of BOLT. (The advantage of using BOLT is that our IMDC staff will provide technical support, yet you might enjoy greater creative choices using alternative software.)

If you are uploading to BOLT, create a PODCAST module in the CONTENTS area of BOLT. This module is your podcast's destination. Once you've created the module, follow the steps below:

- In the new module, click on "Upload/Create".
- Click on "Upload Files".
- Click on "Add a File".
- Click on "Upload". This will take you to your "Documents" folder or wherever you've uploaded your podcast.
- Choose the Podcast you've recorded. Click on the Podcast.
- Your podcast will be uploaded (Watch the green "Progress" bar as it uploads).
- Once your podcast has been uploaded, click on "Add". By doing so, you will be returned to the PODCAST module which will then display whatever title you've given to the podcast.
- Click on the podcast title and listen to the beginning and the end, to make sure your podcast loaded completely. This is an optional step; however, it's always good to make sure all is well before making the podcast accessible to your students.

More Podcasting Options: SOFTWARE

One of our technology gurus, Jared Kishbaugh of IMDC, was kind enough to provide the following information and links about available software for those who find that using a digital audio recorder is not possible or applicable. He notes, "There are many options outside of BOLT to author podcasts, ranging from moderate technical ability to advanced. The final output file (typically an MP3) could then be uploaded to BOLT in various locations depending on the need (Announcements, Content item, Discussions, etc.)."

1. Audacity - <https://www.audacityteam.org/>

- Free, open source, cross-platform audio recorder/editor. (Lisa Stallbaumer has found this easy to use.)
- User Guide - <https://manual.audacityteam.org/>
- Tutorial to create a podcast - <https://ds.bc.edu/making-a-podcast-with-audacity/>
- Note: This is documentation outside of BU but should provide enough detail to get someone started.
- Allows a multitude of editing options.

2. Adobe Audition

- Paid application, however, through the University: All faculty/staff/students have access to it as part of Adobe Creative Cloud
- [BloomSBurg University's Technology Support for Faculty](#); [Lock Haven Technology Support](#); [Mansfield Technology Support](#) - instructions on how to download for your BU or a personal computer. Note: This will install Creative Cloud, from there you will need to install Audition from the list of applications.
- User Guide - <https://helpx.adobe.com/audition/user-guide.html>
- Tutorial to create a podcast - <https://helpx.adobe.com/audition/using/creating-podcasts.html>
- Allows a multitude of editing options.
- May appear more intimidating than Audacity.

3. Mediasite

- Users can opt to record just audio with MDR
- Outcome file would be stored in [BU's Mediasite](#)
- Editing options are very limited compared to standalone digital audio workstations (DAWs) like Audacity and Audition

4. Zoom

- Users can create a self-hosted meeting and use the record to cloud feature of Zoom to record their audio and then in their cloud recordings they can choose to share a link to just the audio file or download the audio file.
- Editing options are very limited compared to standalone digital audio workstations (DAWs) like Audacity and Audition.”

5. Your Smart Phone

The Voice Memo recording feature on many smart phones will allow you to record a potential podcast, the length of which would be determined by the amount of storage space you have on your phone. Jared Kishbaugh, IMDC, provided the following information for iPhones and Android devices:

- Voice Memo app is standard on all iPhones: <https://support.apple.com/guide/iphone/make-a-recording-iph4d2a39a3b/ios>
- For Android devices such as Samsung: <https://www.samsung.com/au/support/mobile-devices/using-voice-recorder/>

“Uploading the audio file into BOLT will vary based on the tool/area desired. In the Content tool you can add a new audio file via the blue Upload/Create button and selecting Video or Audio. Alternatively you can use the Insert Stuff button to add audio files, this is available anywhere you have the HTML editor (Announcements, Assignments, Quizzes, Content, Discussions, etc.).”

Some Helpful Hints and Tips

Be Prepared! Students can tell purely from a professor’s voice, whether or not they are prepared. Before podcasting, draft a topic outline or an informal sequence of prompts (buzz words or phrases) much like you would create just as though you were in a classroom. You would do well to avoid over-scripting or reading notes or text aloud, which can often result in a dry, lifeless presentation.

Relax! The optics are, of course quite different in terms of the dispensation of knowledge via podcasting as compared to standing in front of a classroom filled with students. Podcasting can be a lonely endeavor when you are really only speaking into a microphone rather than to a sea of faces. You may find that at first, recording a podcast can have an unsettling effect upon your delivery. On the other hand, you might discover that the more you podcast, the more comfortable you will be with the process. So the key here is to record a few 5- to 10-minute (or shorter) test runs initially to see how it feels to communicate to an invisible audience. The more podcasting you do, the more relaxed you will become.

Show, don’t Tell! A great poet offered the above bit of wisdom when teaching a poetry writing class. That same advice also applies to good teaching – no matter the vehicle. Even though you have no visual audience when podcasting, you can certainly be someone who is affable, enthusiastic, and humane; someone who supports the theory or concept being introduced by sharing a personal experience, an allegory, or even a humorous account. In short, avoid being detached and monotonous while recording.

DON’T . . .

- upload a podcast without reviewing it first, and editing it if necessary.
- rely on the podcast as a stand-alone mode of online content delivery. Augment it with short videos, PPTs, checklists, sample documents, etc.
- hesitate to contact IMDC, TALE, or the BOLT helpdesk with questions or concerns.

Want to add music to your podcasts or PowerPoint presentations?

When your confidence with podcasts builds, consider adding music by making use of BU's Music Library. After you create an account, which might take a couple of days to confirm, you can add music to your podcast. Contact Asa Kelley for more information.

A Parting Thought from Michael Stephans

There is a small sign hanging in my office that simply exclaims, "There has been an alarming increase in the number of things I know nothing about."

Sometimes, just when we feel we have a handle on some concept or process, life intervenes and all of a sudden we feel like we're slogging through molasses! Once you get the hang of it, podcasting – like many other forms of technology - becomes second nature. The more you utilize it, the easier it is to negotiate. Even so, please know that the IMDC and TALE Centers are certainly accessible, in the event that you'd like some input as we move through the challenges that await us.