

Podcasting ~ Vodcasting

What is a podcast and/or vodcast?

A podcast is a digital media file, or a series of such files, that is distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and personal computers. The files distributed by a podcast can include:

- Audio: mp3, wav, etc
- Video: mp4, mov, etc
- Document: doc, pdf, etc

A podcast is like a webcast. The term "podcast" is a mix of the name of Apple's portable music player, the iPod, and the word broadcast. A podcast...

- Can contain your own radio show or any other audio that you wish others to save and hear...
- Something that you upload together with an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) text file to a web server
- Something that your intended listeners download using one of several software programs that have been created to retrieve your audio file automatically such as Juice or Apple's iTunes



An individual can listen to the podcast at their convenience on their own Apple iPod or any mp3 player.

With vodcasting the file that is published for downloading later is simply a video file such as a mp4 or mov file.

How does it work?

The files distributed by the podcast are stored on a server and have a unique Internet address known as a web feed address. The server does not need to be configured in any particular manner. This makes setting up a podcast relatively easy. All the podcaster needs is access to space on a server via ftp (file transfer protocol).

People can "subscribe" to the podcast feed by submitting the feed address to software known as an aggregator. Typical aggregators include Apple's iTunes and Juice. This is a typical feed address:

`feed://abc.net.au/rn/podcast/feeds/lnl.xml`

When new "episodes" become available in the podcast they will be automatically downloaded to that user's computer. The content of the podcast is pre-recorded and users can check out the material at their leisure, offline. The podcast is not live. What makes a podcast different to the availability of other media content on the Internet is the fact that the content can be subscribed to by an individual and downloaded automatically using software like iTunes or Juice. The software must be capable of reading or feed reader capable of reading feed formats such as RSS or Atom.

The use of push technology

This publish and subscribe model of podcasting is a version of **push** technology. This means that the information provider chooses which files to offer in a feed and the subscriber chooses among available podcast feed channels. Here is an example of podcasts

Podcasting is an automatic mechanism whereby multimedia computer files are transferred from a server to a client, such as your computer, which pulls down XML files containing the Internet addresses of the media files. In general, these files contain audio or video, but also could be images, text, PDF, or any file type.

The person creating the podcast usually begins by creating a file (for example, an MP3 audio file) and making it available on the Internet. This is usually done by posting the file on a publicly available web

server. The only requirement is that the file be accessible through some known URL. This file is often referred to as one episode of a podcast.

The screen shot taken from iTunes below shows some of the podcasts that I have subscribed to:

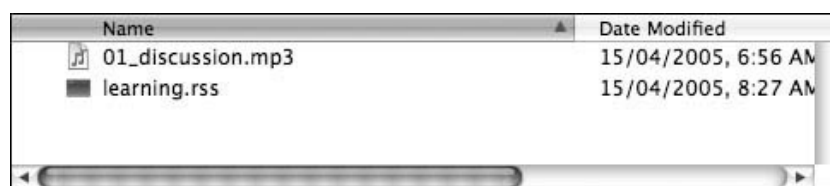


I have subscribed to four podcast “shows”

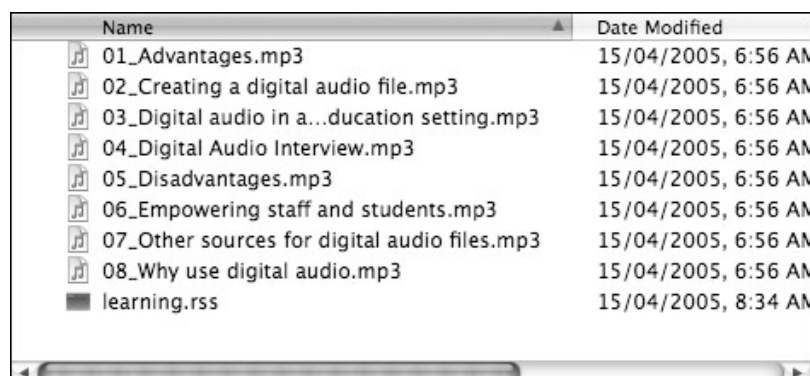
1. Cut to the Core
2. The MrBrown Show
3. TED Taks
4. Triple J’s This Sporting Life

You may observe that I have received a number of the Sporting Life podcasts. Two podcasts are downloading. One is downloading to the MrBrown Show and the other to the TED Talks. This was initiated automatically by iTunes when I opened the software.

The following two screen shots show the files that consist of a podcast. The first example is a podcast with a single episode. There is a single mp3 file and the RSS file with the instructions for the podcast receiving software.



The second screen shot shows a podcast with multiple episodes and the RSS file with the instructions for the podcast receiving software.



A podcast specific aggregator, like iTunes is usually an always-on program which starts when the computer is started and runs in the background. It works exactly like any newsreader each at a specified interval, such as every two hours. If the feed data has substantively changed from when it was previously checked (or if the feed was just added to the application's list), the program determines the location of the most recent item and automatically downloads it.

The downloaded episodes can then be played, replayed, or archived as with any other computer file. Many applications also automatically transfer the newly downloaded episodes available to a user's portable media player, which is connected to the PC running the aggregator, perhaps via a USB cable.

Publicising the podcast

The content provider then acknowledges the existence of that file by referencing it in another file known as the feed. Here is an example of the feed address for Triple J's breakfast programme:

feed://www.abc.net.au/triplej/breakfast/podcast/podcast.xml



Breakfast with Myf, Jay and The Doctor
Myf, Jay and The Doctor present breakfast on weekday mornings, on triple j.

- + Subscribe to this podcast by copying & pasting this address into your podcasting app:
<http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/breakfast/podcast/podcast.xml>
- + iTunes users click the link below:
<itpc://www.abc.net.au/triplej/breakfast/podcast/podcast.xml>

This is the feed address for ABC radio's AM breakfast programme podcast:

feed://abc.net.au/rn/podcast/feeds/lnl.xml

For the technically minded

The feed is a list of the URLs by which episodes of the show may be accessed. This list is usually published in RSS format (although Atom can also be used). This RSS file provides other information, such as publish date, titles, and accompanying text descriptions of the series and each of its episodes. The feed may contain entries for all episodes in the series, but is typically limited to a short list of the most recent episodes, as is the case with many news feeds. Standard podcasts consist of a feed from one author. More recently multiple authors have been able to contribute episodes to a single podcast feed using concepts such as public podcasting and social podcasting.

What sort of information does this RSS file contain?

This is a description of an example for the podcast of a single mp3 file. The words in *italics* describe the *type of information* that you need to complete in those specific fields in the script.

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<rss version="2.0"><channel>
<title>The name of your podcast</title>
<link>The complete address or url of your personal web site</link>
<description>A brief description of your podcast, online audio materials or subject matter</description>
<language>en-us</language>
<copyright>2005</copyright>
<lastBuildDate>The date</lastBuildDate>
<webMaster>Your email address</webMaster>
<ttl>1</ttl>
```

```

<item>
<title>The title of this specific podcast</title>
<description>A short description of the actual podcast.</description>
<pubDate>The publication date</pubDate>
<enclosure url=The exact web site address of the mp3 file, exact file size in bytes and a description of the file type>
</item>
</channel>
</rss>

```

Here is an example of an RSS entry for a podcast that featured a song by David Bowie:

```

<?xml version="1.0"?>
<rss version="2.0"><channel>
<title>Larry's Rare Recordings</title>
<link>http://www.larkin.net.au/podcast/</link>
<description>Live concert recordings and other rock oddities from Larry's Collection</description>
<language>en-us</language>
<copyright>2004</copyright>
<lastBuildDate>Sun, 20 Oct 2004 00:00:01 GMT</lastBuildDate>
<webMaster>jname@email.net.au</webMaster>
<ttl>1</ttl>
<item>
<title>A classic Bowie performance</title>
<description>This moving performance by Bowie of It's Gonna Be Me was recorded at the Universal Amphitheatre by his mixing desk crew during his Diamond Dogs tour in 1974. The song was not officially released until the early 1990s. This live version was published when the open reel recording of the concert was made available to the public via an auction.</description>
<pubDate>Sun, 20 Oct 2004 00:00:01 GMT</pubDate>
<enclosure url="http://www.larkin.net.au/podcast/test.mp3" length="8923641" type="audio/mpeg" />
</item>
</channel>
</rss>

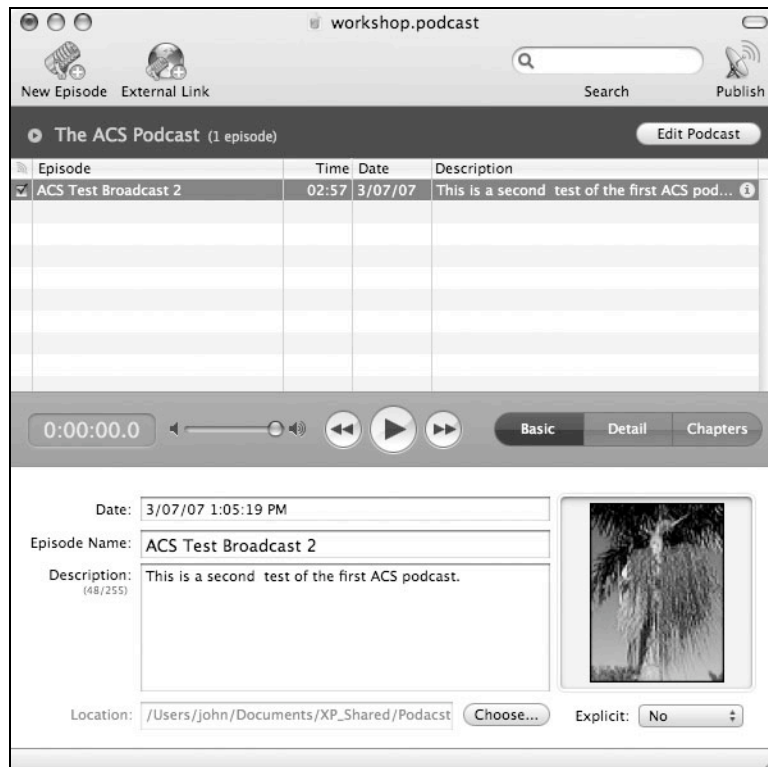
```

When podcasts were initially set up back in 2004 the creators had to write this code. It was usually a matter of copy and paste and then simple changes for the date, title and description of the episode. The completed RSS or XML file was then uploaded on the web server via ftp. The podcast episodes, such as the mp3 files were uploaded to the same directory.

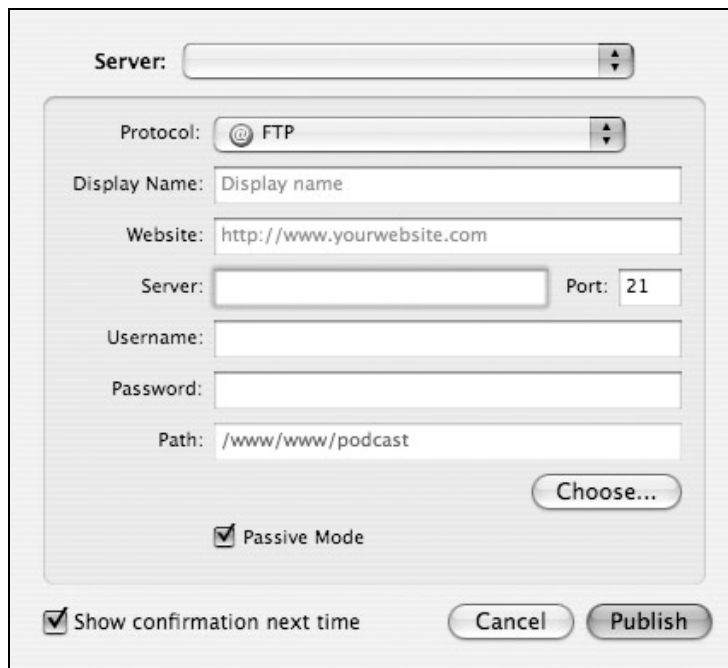
Not long afterwards dedicated software was created that allowed users to create, manage and publish podcasts. Several screenshots from a Podcast publishing software known as Podcast Maker are shown below.



Details for the Podcast Show



Detail for the first episode of the podcast show



FTP details that allow the show to be published on a web server entered here.

Links

Please visit this web site for additional information and links to the world of podcasting.

http://www.larkin.net.au/024_podcasting.html

Source: Wikipedia entry: Podcast. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcast>