What is Podcasting?

Podcasts are audio or video content that can be downloaded on a computer or fed to a mobile music player (mp3 player or iPod.) Podcasting allows anyone to create and self-publish a syndicated "radio or video show" and gives broadcast radio or television programs a new way to distribute content.

There are a couple of things that differentiate a "regular" audio file from a podcast. The first is that most podcasts are saved as MP3 files. An MP3 file is just another type of file. Nothing fancy. Just as you may already be familiar with pdf files, text files or Excel files, you can now add MP3 to that list.

The second thing that makes a podcast unique is that it is an audio file that others can subscribe to using RSS. RSS stands for Real Simple Syndication and we've already discussed it in a former lesson. For the true techie aficionados out there (and those who want to impress their colleagues) know this:

A podcast isn't a podcast unless it is being subscribed to via RSS.

If there is no RSS involved, a podcast is simply an audio file. A lot of people will refer to audio files as podcasts – but technically they are incorrect.

One last point... A podcast is posted somewhere on the Web and others can subscribe to it and download it either onto their computer or their MP3 player (like an iPod).

So – for a true podcast to happen...
- Your audio file is posted somewhere on the Web
- The file is usually posted as an MP3 file
- People are able to subscribe to your files via RSS

It sounds confusing, but once you get the hang of recording and encoding, you will be well on your way to being a podcast superstar and competing with the rock band U2 on the iTunes Music Store!

WHY HAS PODCASTING BECOME SO POPULAR?

What can we say?
- Podcasts are easy to produce
- You can create one using free software
- They are easy to distribute via the Internet
- They are portable - you can listen to them when and where they want
- If they are attached to a blog, your audience can give feedback
- It helps educators tap into a technology many young people are already using

So enough with reading - let's listen to a few made by educators and students.

http://classroomfiles.com/DrTyson.mp3

http://bobsprankle.com/podcasts/0506/rm208vodcast.mov

http://www.liberty.k12.mo.us/svjh/langhorststudycast6.mp3

FINDING PODCASTS

The ability to create and post podcasts on the Web is still relatively new at the moment, but search engines dedicated to searching this medium are starting to pop up. Try
- Podzinger - http://www.podzinger.com/
- Podscope - http://www.podscope.com/
- Blinkx - http://www.blinkx.com.com/

ITUNES

Another option is to search through iTunes. iTunes is free software that organizes music for an iPod or MP3 player. The software allows podcasters, including teachers and schools, a way to publish podcasts for an authentic audience. If you already own an iPod - you will already have this software installed on your machine. If not, you can download it from http://www.apple.com/itunes/download/.

Need help with downloading iTunes? I'm sure your students have already done this - many times!

Step 1 - Look for the Download button and select whether you will download to Mac or Windows.

Step 2 - Once you click the Download button click Run to install. (This process will take around 5 - 7 minutes to complete.)

Step 3 - The installation process will guide you through a series of links to finish the process. Click

Next through each window and Finish when complete.

Once installed, this icon should automatically appear on your desktop.

To find the iTunes icon, for Windows users click Start (lower left) click iTunes icon. For Mac users, look for the icon in your dock. Once you open to the icon, you will be taken to the Music Store.

Click **Podcasts** on the left menu.

Scroll down to the bottom of the page until you see a Categories list. Select Education.

Select K-12 as a **Subcategory**.

You will see a long alphabetical list of podcasts. You can click on any one to listen to it. It may take a moment or two for it to start.

iTunes stores a list of the podcasts, but not the files themselves. The podcast is brought to you from the Web to iTunes, to your player. If you click on a title of any podcast, you will hear a sampling from the podcast. To hear the entire podcast click the Subscribe button. (You can always delete it later.)

SOFTWARE FOR CREATING PODCASTS

Below are three options for podcasting depending on if you want to record from a PC, a Mac, or even from your cell phone. Each site offers instructions for installation and operation.

Audacity - http://audacity.sourceforge.net
Garageband - http://www.apple.com/ilife/garageband/
Gcast – http://www.gcast.com

November Learning does host its own podcast channel that you may be interested in. To find it, open the iTunes Music Store. In the search box, simply type in November Learning. We think you will enjoy what you find!

Questions? Contact brian@novemberlearning.com