My Evolving Thinking About Podcasting

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Thinking 1.0

If memory serves me, I began teaching my graduate students to podcast in November 2004. At that time I worked hard to translate my embryonic understanding of RSS feeds, XML files and other technical gobbledygook into practical strategies for educators wishing to podcast. Compelling storytelling, complete with audio recording, editing and publishing, was the goal, not understanding network protocols.

So, I created documents, like Gary's Quick Podcasting Tutorial, which suggested that podcasters merely change a bit of text in the template XML file provided. I was not alone, countless others created "simple" tutorials like this very good one from MIT. These tutorials were helpful, but required fledgling podcasters to properly save the XML file and upload it along with the original mp3 file to a web server. In Thinking 1.0 & 2.0, audio was recorded and edited with Audacity.

More than a decade's worth of experience has led me to conclude that some people will never understand the use of FTP clients for uploading files to the World Wide Web. Not only that, but software such as iPodder (now called Juice) was required in order to subscribe to podcasts. Sites like Feedburner were required for publicizing podcasts. Then there was feed validating to worry about. All of these tools, steps and sites made podcasting needlessly confusing. The focus needs to be on personal expression, creativity and coherent communication.

Thinking 2.0

During the summer of 2005, Apple updated their popular iTunes music library software to play and subscribe to podcasts. Overnight, podcasting had gone mainstream. Millions of podcasts were subscribed to during the first week. Apple made it easy to publicize your podcast. However, it was still too much of a pain to publish podcasts, even after you labored over the creative aspects of the process.

When TextEdit betrayed me one too many times and saved my XML file in a mysterious file format that doomed my public demonstration of podcasting, I decided that there needed to be a better way. Being humiliated by the quality of your podcast is one thing, but failing to publish it in the first place was maddening.

Several low-cost shareware tools emerged around this time. Such software allows you to drag and drop recorded audio (and even video) files. The programs then create the RSS feed and up-load all of the necessary bits to the server of your choice. They even let you add keywords, a graphic icon and other data that makes your podcast stand out. After a year of podcasting the hard way, I decided that I would recommend that my students and colleagues use one of these podcasting tools rather than do things the old-fashioned (2004) way.

GarageBand

Thinking 3.0 - Nirvanna (for now)

Before I got the chance to share my pedagogical epiphany with students or workshop participants, the evil geniuses at Apple did it again. They created digital hub software so clever, powerful and easy-to-use that I can now record, edit, enhance and one-click publish podcasts with Garageband 3, part of the new low-cost iLife '06 suite (purchase the single-pack or the bargain-priced 5-computer family pack), that comes free with all new Macintosh computers. iLife '06 combines the intuitive recording, editing and royalty-free music composition tools found in previous versions of Garageband and makes high-quality podcasting possible for anyone.

If you are a PC user, sorry! You may wish to pick up a low-cost Mac Mini and get iLife '06 for free. Then you'll be able to join in the fun!

Why I now recommend Garageband 3 as the perfect podcasting recording and publishing studio:

- **Simple interface -** Tell Garageband that you are making a podcast then click record and start talking.

- **Built-in voice enhancement -** Your voice will be enhanced automatically or tweak any of a number of audio parameters, including echo, reverb, noise reduction, etc...

- **Auto-ducking -** Drop a musical "bed" under a narration and the auto-ducking feature will automatically cause the music volume to lower when the narration begins and swell when it ends.

- **Sound effects library included -** Add sound effects to your production from the built-in li-brary of classic sounds.

- **Jingles included -** Need music to open and close your show? Garageband 3 includes an im-pressive library of royalty-free music.

- **Stingers included -** Punch up transitions between stories in your podcast with the built-in stingers.

- **Record iChat A/V interviews** - Interview experts via iChat AV and all of the voices will be recorded as separate audio tracks ready for editing.

- **Enhance your podcast with titles, ads and other graphic cues -** Drag graphics to the timeline and they appear at key moments in your radio program.

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- **Score a film -** Make a movie with iMovie, drag it into Garagaband 3 and compose a score.

- **Real-time sound effects -** Hit keys during a recording session to insert boings, crashes, laughter or other sound effects in real-time. Be your own Morning Zoo!

- **Score your films -** Drop a movie into Garageband and score it with predefined loops or your own musical instruments.

- **Compose music with loops** - Tired of using the included jingles? Compose new royalty-free music with Garageband Loops. Tons of loops are included and even more are available online and in stores.

- **Compose music with real instruments** - Sing, connect your electric guitar or play a MIDI keyboard into Garageband 3 and record your own music in this multitrack studio.

- **Do all of the above and more -** Mix live recordings with software instruments, loops, sound effects, stingers, jingles and graphics in one uniquely personal production.

- **Create once, use often -** Export to iTunes or iMovie and use your "podcast" to score a film.

- **One-click publishing -** Best of all, push a button and your audio or video podcast is automatically published on the web for your potentially infinite audience. You never have to worry about XML, RSS or FTP again.

Garageband 3.0

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New workshop for schools & conferences
As featured at NSBA T+L, CUE, TCEA, NYSCATE & NAIS

Podcasting for Educators: A Mobile Audience for your students

Podcasting is the latest innovation to sweep the Internet. In the hands of creative educators, this low-cost low-barrier vehicle for self-expression offers learners the ability to create their own regularly scheduled broadcasts online. Best of all, members of the community can listen to the podcasts at their leisure as new programs are automatically downloaded and installed on their iPod or other digital media player.

This workshop will share the hows and whys of podcasting, complete with ideas for innovative learning adventures and school-to-home communication. Simple music composition foley editing, sound-effects and scoring techniques are included in this hands-on workshop or presentation. Valuable shopping tips for new low-cost gear and ways to use technology you already own will be shared. Don't miss this opportunity to seize the future!

Contact Gary Stager to schedule this workshop.

Click here for information on similar workshops, including: *iLife '06 Everything an Educator Needs to Know about Digital Media; Music Composition Across the Curriculum or Advanced iMovie.*