Q&A Session for
Implementing Podcasting in the Classroom
Web Conference

Presenter: Michael Gay
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Q: What percentage of Purdue faculty fully records their lectures?
A: Right now, only about 60 or so of Purdue’s 800+ faculty have their lectures recorded and podcast.

Q: Can you place access restrictions on the podcast audio?
A: We have placed password restrictions on the course podcast directories using .htaccess functions within the Apache web server.

Q: We want to know if we can also do VIDEO?
A: Since programs like iTunes can support video recorded in either MPEG-4 or Quicktime, there is no physical restriction and the video files can be “vidcast” in much the same way as the audio files are podcast.

Q: How does RSS work w/ password protected sites e.g. Blackboard?
A: RSS is a simple text file so it can be served as would any other static page. However, for the podcatching client to use it, the authentication needs to be a generic type of authentication. We have not tested yet with our WEB CT so I cannot tell you how well it will work.

Q: Are all your lectures publicly available or is there some mechanism for authentication?
A: Some of the courses are password protected at the request of the instructor.
Q: What type of equipment do you provide for recording in the classroom? Do the instructors have to check it out and set it up?

A: We tap into the existing voice reinforcement audio system in the classroom. The only thing the instructor needs to do is pick up the microphone and begin teaching their lecture as they normally would. The recording technician at our central facility starts the recordings.

Q: Can users unsubscribe to a RSS feed at the end of the term?

A: If the RSS files are still on the server and the audio files are still on the server, then there is no reason they cannot. When I left, we had not yet developed a policy to address this. I assume it will be up to the instructors as to whether they want the previous semester’s lectures available.

Q: Is this used primarily for on-ground classes? Are Purdue’s online courses using this in some way?

A: The online courses are handled by a separate entity on campus and have not yet incorporated podcast lectures.

Q: Have you had any accessibility issues with Podcasts? What do you do for deaf/hard of hearing students who cannot access the audio files?

A: Before I left, I met with some of the people involved in an accessibility project and they were willing to provide online transcripts of any of the courses if it were requested. In fact, they were considering using our recordings to create transcripts for courses that they currently are providing for students.

Q: How does podcasting affect lecture attendance?

A: This is a subject of debate among some of the instructors. We do not have enough data to know for sure, but most of the instructors using the service have not noticed any significant decline.

Q: What are some of the pedagogical benefits & drawbacks of using podcasts?

A: We know that learners learn best when they hear something more than once, especially
when time has passed between the first time and the next time they hear it. Having the ability for a student to listen to difficult concepts after class or before an exam is an asset for slower learners. The ability for students to review material at will is the real benefit. We have also heard from learners where English is not their first language that this is useful for them to review. This makes me think that this might be a good tool to teach foreign languages (kind of the reverse benefit). Accessibility is the real benefit of the whole project. Make it available and they will use it…we have the statistics to prove it!

Q: Which disciplines were most interested in Podcasting

A: We really did not have one discipline favor the service; however disciplines that are lecture based are more apt to use the service.

Q: RE: Access Control. Do all podcatching software handle http authentication?

A: Good question. iTunes authenticates once per session. If you restart iTunes, you must reenter the passwords. Some of the other clients let you save a password so they can automatically authenticate. Hopefully iTunes will add this capability as more secure or pay-based podcasts become popular.

Q: Could you please further explain HT access?

A: This could be a topic for another presentation; however a websearch on .htaccess will yield what you need to implement it. This is really the realm of a web server administrator so you might start there as well.

Q: Does XML have tags to control access or does it have to be done at the server level?

A: Right now access is handled at the server level. XML is really just a data storage system and cannot perform any active authentication functions.

Q: Does Purdue employ technical staff to support faculty that want to podcast lectures?

A: Purdue’s podcasting service is completely supported by technical staff. There is one dedicated recording technician and classroom systems are supported by the regular audiovisual technicians.
Q: How streamlined can you make this for your faculty colleagues?

A: We have tried to make the service as streamlined and simple as possible for the Faculty.

Q: Are MP3 players other than iPods compatible with podcasts?

A: The players will play the file, the real question here is can the mp3 be loaded to them automatically? This is a function of the podcatching client. Right now, I think iTunes is only supporting ipods.

Q: What are the copyright infringement implications of podcasting?

A: This could be the subject of an entire conference. At Purdue, the faculty hold the copyrights to their material, therefore we will only podcast a course requested by the instructor. The instructor is made aware of the implications.

Q: How do you satisfy accessibility requirements for the deaf and hard-of-hearing?

A: Repeat Question. See above.

Q: Has daily class attendance dropped at Purdue in classes with podcasting?

A: Repeat Question. See above.

Q: If you wanted to present a single session would you use a podcast, or would you make it a downloadable audiobook?

A: Podcasting works best with groups of sessions with similar subject matter.

Q: You have mentioned use of podcast for review by students. Do you have any statistics or feel for percentage of students replacing lectures with podcasts?

A: We have no real data on this. The service went online only this August so there has not been much time to get this type of data.
Q: At our university, we stream quite a few events, including classes. Our Attorney General has interpreted current law very strictly and recommended that we password protect the media that streams all classes, in case instructors might use copyrighted...

A: Attorneys will always take the safe road. Probably good advice, however.

Q: Any studies on what happens to class attendance of podcasted courses?

A: Repeat Question, See above.

Q: If they want to do audio or video - what software do they use to record it? Like Real / Quicktime / etc.

A: We use hardware devices to create the recordings. We use the Marantz PMD-570 deck to create the MP3 files.

Q: material during their class session. How would such a legal interpretation affect podcasting? What techniques could be used to protect access to a podca

Q: WE use Quicktime interactive chaptering to frame reference specific content. Is there anything similar w/ podcasting/MP3 audio?

A: right now, there are no provisions in the podcast to support this type of control.

Q: Is there any evidence to suggest that podcasts increase student performance eg in terms of an increase in grades

A: We have no data on this at this time.

Q: What is COTS?

A: Commercial-Off-The-Shelf

Q: Does the university bookstore sell MP3 players such as iPods?
A: The bookstore sells plenty of these (the bookstore is not affiliated with the University).

Q: Are students' questions/responses recorded and podcasted as part of the lecture? If so, what permissions are required?

A: We do not purposely record the student’s questions/comments but they can get picked up inadvertently. The instructor’s have announced that the course is being recorded at the beginning of most course sessions.

Q: What kind of jack is at the end of the dry audio line? How does the Marantz connect to the audio line?

A: In the classroom, the jack is a simple RJ-11. In our central record facility, the lines come in on a terminal block that we wire to our audio router (KNOX Chameleon 64). The outputs of the router then connect to the inputs of the decks.

Q: How does podcasting impact student attendance?

A: Repeat question. See above.

Q: Does Boilercast integrate with any of the popular CMS packages like Blackboard, or WebCT? That is, can it publish these directly to course spaces in these packages?

A: We were looking into integration with WebCT Vista. I can’t say how it will work out, but I am sure it is possible.

Q: Have you considered integration into course management systems like WebCT or Blackboard?

A: Repeat Question. See above.

Q: What procedures come into play when lecturers use sizable chunks of copyrighted material in class--movie clips, music files, photos, charts, and so forth?

A: Most of the lectures that use this type of material are password protected.
Q: Are you encasing the stream in http?

A: The streaming portion of the service can be streamed HTTP, MMS, or RTSP.

Q: Can you secure the podcasts? If so, how does it happen?

A: Repeat Question. See above.

Q: what about the use of cms software (drupal, for instance) or integration with blogging software (wordpress, movable type?) I know there's a writing course at Purdue that's doing so.

A: We are not doing that as part of the service, but there are no restrictions on the faculty to do so.

Q: Is the 30-minute target more instructor or student driven? Do you find a lot of students downloading in the half-hour window?

A: Our target was self imposed. The old cassette service made the cassettes available within 6 hours. I never really looked at the statistics, but I know anecdotally that the students thing this is a great feature.

Q: Is it possible to password protect each class meeting's recording as opposed to the course level?

A: It is possible, but not the way we set up our directory structure.

Q: How is the web page for the course updated? Does Helix update the web page?

A: The custom software I wrote updates the web page when it copies the audio file to the server and updates the RSS feed.
Q: What is the "average" size (in MB) of an .mp3 lecture?
A: At 64K mono, they are running around 35meg.

Q: Is possible to track usage of the podcasts?
A: We can track the number of downloads of the mp3 file.

Q: Are the recordings of the complete class? Do you edit any of the files for topic information or tag them at specific points for topic, etc? Would it not be cumbersome for a student to find relevant information from say a three hour lecture? How do you handle?
A: The recordings are of the complete classes. The longest lecture we record is about 90 minutes. They could be broken up for larger sessions.

Q: Did any faculty object to having their material so readily available online?
A: Some did and decided not to use the service.

Q: What are the issues around faculty intellectual property rights?
A: Repeat question. See above.

Q: Can the podcasts be reused from one semester to the next?
A: There is no reason they could not, however I think we all hope the instructors will update their material occasionally ;)

Q: how long do you keep files available for access?
A: We never really set a policy on this and were waiting to see what the instructors asked for.

Q: how many staff members are required to support all of these podcasts?
A: We have one recording technician handling all 70 courses and he could handle many more (one semester he did over 90 semester long courses to cassette). The regular AV technicians support the infrastructure as part of their regular duties. A server administrator is helpful as well.

Q: How long will lectures be made available? Is server space a consideration in keeping lectures available?
A: Repeat Question. See above.

Q: What are the file sizes of the mp3s and what is the quality setting?
A: 64K mono running about 35 meg in size.

Q: Do you charge faculty for this service?
A: This is a free service to all credit courses.
Q: Not sure if this q. showed up earlier: what about accommodation for deaf and hard of hearing? Do you provide transcripts?

A: Repeat Question. See above.

Q: How much were the Marantz units each? How much does each hold memory-wise? Are there alternative products that are comparable?

A: We got the Marantz Units from Broadcaster's General Store for a little over $700 each. The come with a small 32 meg memory card but we bought some larger ones. I looked for other products but have not found one that does the job as well as these.