



Resource Review

Name of reviewer:	Brett Aggersberg
Job title and department:	Media Demonstrator, School of Creative Arts and Humanities
Institution:	Trinity College Carmarthen

Name of reviewed item:	Podcasting for Learning in Universities
Author(s) / Editor(s):	Gilly Salmon and Palitha Edirisingha
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When technology moves faster than the research and policies that inform its implementation into everyday university life, publications that guide and inform academic staff on the practical and pedagogical implications of podcasting are few and far between. Whilst there are many technical manuals on producing podcasts there is still little on the effects of this technology on the learning experience.

'Podcasting' is the buzz word in the delivery of module content. It is seen as one of the most accessible Web 2.0 technologies. It now has a great deal of prominence in Virtual Learning Environments such as Blackboard. This diverse medium has only been available for a few years which is why it still has an air of freshness, uncertainty and undiscovered potential.

The contents of *Podcasting for Learning in Universities* is a well balanced mixture of theory, technical practicalities and honest accounts of podcasting experiences to date. The editors of this book, Gilly Salmon and Palitha Edirisingha, both work at the Beyond Distance Research Alliance at the University of Leicester. Specialising in the field of innovation in teaching and learning gives the content a sound grounding. For novices, the book details some potential applications for a podcast: as well as an archive of a given lecture, a podcast can provide a record of field work. There is also an explanation of the 'iWalk' and the benefits of an instructional podcast are explored. This publication is also up to date as it includes the three (current)

variations of podcasting: audio podcasting, enhanced podcasting and video podcasting.

The highlighted experiences of podcasting are well contextualised in terms of students' learning processes, the educator's flexibility and the overall direction of digital learning. The research has been largely taken from international workshops run by the IMPALA (Informal Mobile Podcasting And Learning Adaptation, www.impala.ac.uk) project.

Contributors to *Podcasting for Learning in Universities* include many well-respected academics from a wide variety of disciplines including e-learning, multimedia, and education. Variety and collaboration are at the heart of this book. The academic implications of podcasting are presented in a logical and stimulating way. Whilst the practicalities and technologies are discussed, the effects on the learning experience and enhancement are always the leading concern. Current thinking on reflective, collaborative, and distance learning are all applied to podcasting in HE.

Particularly for academics and senior managers who are new to podcasting, this book is a very strong advocate for this method of enhancing teaching, learning, and assessment. However, this book does not preach podcasting as the be all and end all of education. It is presented as a resource that is delivered alongside established methods of teaching. When presented with the evidence of the students' unrivalled access to this technology driven resource, it would be such a missed opportunity not to engage with it at some level. Podcasting is a serious and powerful tool in the array of Web 2.0 resources that academics have at their disposal. Along with Wikis and Blogs, podcasting's potential to evolve and become a major source of information for learners should not be underestimated.

Of particular interest in relation to assessment, is the chapter on students' podcasts as learning tools. It features the reports on a pilot study where students were encouraged to engage with subject material by producing their own podcasts. As well as developing subject specific understanding, the students learnt a wide variety of transferable skills.

The final chapter of *Podcasting for Learning in Universities* called *The Future of Podcasting* considers the challenges of learning from previous mistakes so that podcasting can have a future. It also encourages us to "cherish this rare opportunity to change the learning world". Given the constantly changing HE landscape, podcasting may be an opportunity to make a stable anchor that is here to stay. The book is very accessible as it can be used as a reference resource and, as such, has a number of pathways which can be used to access its contents. The pathways are listed at the front of the book in the context of relevance to the reader.

This book is of particular interest to podcast novices and experienced technologists that have helped this medium evolve over the last few years. The publication can also form a valuable basis for the research of learning and teaching methodologies. Novices will gain a clear overview of what podcasting can facilitate in Higher Education. Seasoned users will affirm its relevance and academic standing in today's multilayered university environment. For a researcher, *Podcasting for Learning in Universities* provides insightful case studies and clear links to established pedagogical rationales. This is not a technical publication, although it does cover the basics. It is, however, a well researched academic text that examines podcasting in Higher Education. This book also has a dedicated web site at www.podcastingforlearning.com.