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WAYNESBURG UNIVERSITY'S ENTERTAINMENT AND ARTS MANAGEMENT STUDENT SAMANTHA MORAD WORKING ON A PODCAST. Source_Samantha Morad.

/TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Using Podcasts to Enhance Student Learning Inside & Outside the Classroom

By Dr. Xela Batchelder (Waynesburg University); **Thomas Karr, MFA** (Wayne State University); **Dr. Brett Ashley Crawford** (Carnegie Mellon University); **Brenda Lee Johnston, MAM** (Butler University); **and Dr. Amy Shimshon-Santo, Ph.D.** (Claremont Graduate University)

Introduction

As technology evolves and the society we live in changes, so do the ways we learn and engage with information. A challenge faced by higher education is to find new ways to engage students and diversify the voices represented in curricula. One way to approach this challenge is by using podcasts. Podcasts allow students to learn about current issues in the field, hear from new and myriad voices, and provide new ways for students to engage with material. Teaching students to develop their own podcasts increases their knowledge and practical skills as they learn the software used to record, edit, and share podcasts. For these reasons and more, podcasts are an effective and desirable way to achieve several educational goals.

What is a podcast?

Podcasts have proven to be a useful tool for student learning. One of the main benefits is their appeal to digital natives (Prensky, 2001). Although podcasts can support a more Universal Course Design, providing more opportunity for those students who learn better through auditory means, they are also an auditory-dependent pathway, perhaps making learning more difficult for students with hearing impairments. So, it is recommended that all podcast content (for class work or otherwise) be transcribed for the web with a free or low-cost transcription software.

Why Podcasts?

For those who are convinced that “podcasting is a fad or a trend”, data reveals that it is actually a mode of communication that is still growing.

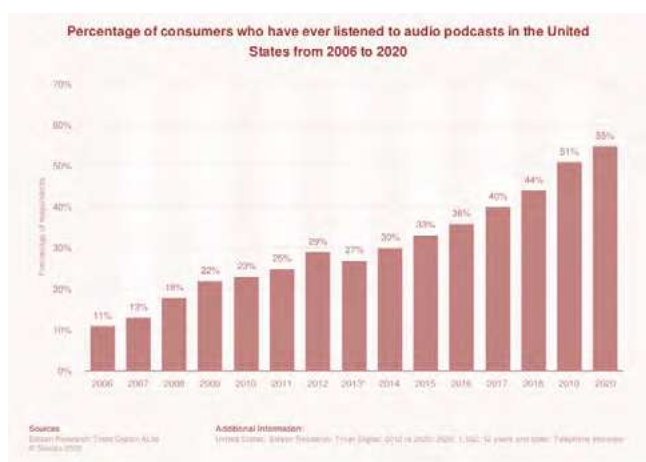


FIGURE 1. LISTENERSHIP YEAR OVER YEAR. Source: “Podcasting in the U.S.,” Statista, 2020.

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* noted 2019 as the “Year of the Podcast in Higher Education”. But, as is demonstrated in Figure 1, listenership continues to grow. The pandemic has only accelerated this trend. Why is podcasting a preferred means of consuming ideas, stories, and other content? In many ways, podcasts are an outgrowth of contemporary life: podcasts are easy, mobile, and personalized: the trifecta of modern life. If that answers the practical motivation, it still does not answer the deeper “why”. Research into audiences reveals that the number one reason to listen to a podcast is to learn something new, which aligns well for using podcasting as a pedagogical tool (Podtrac, 2020).

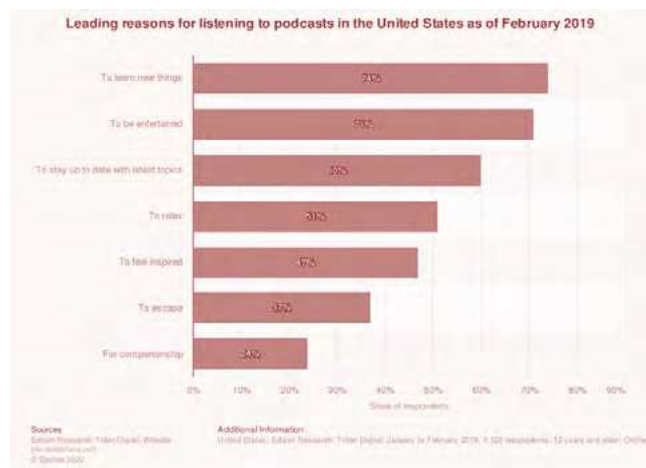


FIGURE 2. REASONS FOR LISTENING. Source: “Podcasting in the U.S.,” Statista, 2020.

On the practical side, in training future arts managers, a pedagogical goal is to provide students with the tools to succeed in their careers and to support the successful work of arts organizations. With fifty percent of all homes listening to podcasts, arts organizations are utilizing podcasts as a mode for audience engagement (Listen Notes, 2020). Thus, if institutions are using podcasts as programming and communication tools, then it is important that training programs provide students with an awareness and proficiency in podcasting as both a consumer and producer.

Pedagogical Theory

Humans have always told stories with sound—whether the parole of speech acts, or musical performances (Holquist, 1983). Technologies for sonic communication continue to evolve. Podcasting has become a widely used learning strategy that belongs in the arts management classroom. We consider the management of sonic knowledge objects as relevant to the techne of art making, preservation and archiving of artistic knowledge, and technological innovation or practical applications of scientific knowledge (Bolisani et al, 2012). Assigning audio knowledge objects in the classroom is a refreshing strategy to diversify the experience of in-person and remote learning (Bolisani, Borgo & Oltramari, 2012). Producing podcasts in class cultivates collaborative learning while providing novel opportunities to diversify curriculum, build personal and social skills, and gain confidence using cutting edge technology.

Podcasts can be used in the classroom to broaden access to cultural and geographic content. Podcasting can enhance intersectional studies by including a wide range of voices and experiences (Crenshaw et al, 2019; Thimm, Chaudhuri & Mahler, 2017). Hierarchical social structures amplify privileged voices while demeaning or silencing people who occupy a lower status in the social hierarchy (Wilkerson, 2020). Podcasting culturally relevant content can amplify silenced voices and performances of cultural citizenship (Flores & Benmayor, 1997). Amplifying a diversity of voices cultivates worldliness and increases empathy among participants critical to disrupting cultural hegemony and hierarchy in favor of anti-racism and inclusion (Kendi, 2020; Wilkerson, 2020; Hooks, 2015).

Podcasting has potential health benefits for students. Offering meaningful content through mobile devices can expand asynchronous or remote learning beyond a sedentary experience. Mobile options offer valuable learning for students to experience while in transit or performing other necessary mundane tasks. This provides the potential physical and mental health benefits from movement or exercise while learning that can mitigate the negative impact of sedentary behavior or excessive screen time associated with remote learning.

Learning to produce podcasts prepares students to better serve differently abled publics in their future careers as arts managers. Everyone will experience disability in their life at some point, and arts management education would do well to prepare future professionals to better serve artists and audiences throughout the human life cycle. Audio-rich teaching and learning enhances accessibility to better serve participants who are differently abled.

Producing podcasts can be used to develop compassionate listeners, courageous communicators, and practice shared leadership during collaboration. In terms of skill development, producing podcasts activates numerous skills including attentive listening, composition and writing, curation, public speaking, and collaborative decision-making

regarding content (Gardner, 2011). Producing podcasts enhances students' competence using professional software, equipment, and digital platforms. Producing podcasts cultivates confidence with one's own voice, while affirming the diversity of voices, perspectives, and expertise in any given learning community (Campbell & Ngan 2020; Shimshon-Santo 2020). In addition, participants become more sophisticated code-switching across communications modalities and styles that will be useful to their future careers as professionals.

Listening to and creating podcasts provide opportunities to communicate across the generations and expand ways to personalize the curriculum by bringing students' world, social capital, and creative interests to the center (Hooks, 2015). Whether listening to learn, or learning how to produce sonic knowledge, podcasting plays to the strengths of artists as storytellers, music makers, visualists, and kinesthetic communicators. Arts management pedagogy continues to adapt to issues in techne, preservation, and technology. Listening to and producing podcasts in the classroom can further empower educators to inspire inclusivity, collaboration, and connection in their learning communities.

Classroom Applications

Educational applications include both listening to podcast content and/or producing podcasts in the classroom. This section discusses classroom applications for both listening and producing podcast content.

Listening to Podcasts in the Classroom

Listening to podcasts can be used as part of assignments in preparation for classroom discussion and in tandem with students creating their own podcasts, as listening to podcasts helps them understand what makes a quality podcast (such as style, musical enhancements, and technical production). A benefit of listening to podcasts is that they can be listened to while driving or doing simple tasks like cleaning. For students overwhelmed with assignments, it helps to remind them that this assignment can be

done while mundane tasks are accomplished. Having students listen to podcasts is particularly effective for introducing them to the world of podcasting. Therefore, the first goal is to have students listen to podcasts and to become familiar with important podcasts in their field of study. Students then write reflections and critiques of the podcasts and discuss them together as a class.

The Podcast Listening Assignment includes the instructor providing a link to or title of the podcast for the class to listen to and a short writing assignment with prompts. This ensures student engagement by requiring them to be attentive to the podcast, while also reinforcing the course themes present in the podcast. The instructor often adds a few open-ended prompts (student's favorite part of the podcast, what students learned, etc.). Such questions help the instructor assess what students are thinking about and learning from the podcast; this often proves to be surprising since students come to the assignment with diverse experiences and backgrounds. Such questions also allow the instructor to catch misunderstandings or promote unique viewpoints in advance of the class discussion. The assignment concludes with an in-class discussion of the podcast.

Producing Podcasts in the Classroom

Creating podcasts move students from passive consumption to active engagement with course materials. Podcasts are a transmedia opportunity for students to demonstrate understanding and application. Podcasts can be created just for the class to listen to, ergo tech skills are less important, or they can create them for an actual audience demonstrating proficiency in content and technical skills.

When creating a podcast, in lieu of a paper or other assignment, it is important to provide the frameworks students need to consider (Hicks, 2018). These include thinking through a pre-recording script, collecting biographical or context information for the content, and then completing outlines of purpose and content parts. A sample pre-recording script might look like:

Time	Speaker/Text/Content	Sound FX	Purpose
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Another approach would be a storyboard. The actual podcast recording should include clear introductions and contextualizations that might include trigger warnings, special acknowledgements, pre-recorded and mixed sound effects, as well as show notes that might include citations or other references. Providing students with a starter idea for content format might come from a listening exercise or a list of choices including interviews, storytelling, research reports, or panel discussions.

Technology needed can be from simple to advanced, but a quality microphone is necessary for anything to be distributed outside of a classroom setting. Otherwise, the microphone on a cellphone or computer can suffice. Once content is captured, a student or assistant can work in editing software. Audacity is a free, open source tool that is available to all and easy to learn. Additionally, simple editing can be done on native apps in smartphones or computers. Once edited and saved as mp4 files, content can be distributed in myriad ways. Many professionals use syndication tools like Libsyn or Podbean, however a discussion board in a learning management system can also be used. If publishing broadly, it is important to provide for universal access via transcription. Tools such as otter.ai or descript can automate the job, or if using for on-campus purposes only, the university disability services team can provide support.

Conclusion

In sum, an array of positive learning outcomes can be gained from including podcasts in teaching and learning that are applicable to undergraduate to graduate level education, and from community-based spaces to executive education curriculum. Including audio-based assignments builds professional relationships and expands voices and knowledge available to the classroom. Listening to podcasts furthers student learning while diversifying voices and knowledge included in curriculum. Active listening to current podcasts makes new information available for study more quickly than many literary publication modes. Just as reading informs writing, listening

prepares students to become podcast creators and communicators. Whether audio works are shared only in the classroom, or with broader audiences, valuable collaboration skills are learned including communication skills (listening and structuring communication), and critical thinking through multimodal forms of teaching and learning. Students develop expertise in listening, interviewing, interrogating knowledge, and expanding their awareness of the arts, culture, and administration. Listening to, and/or producing, podcasts fortifies social networks that connect students, educators, artists, audiences, administrators, and creative communities locally and globally. Podcasting expands platforms for students to think critically, connect, and cultivate their own ideas and voices.

Questions for further discussion

- Do you listen to podcasts, and if so, which ones and why?
- Have you listened to, or produced, podcasts in the classroom? If so, how have you used them to enliven arts management pedagogy? What new sonic strategies might you use to deliver content, and shape assignments?
- How can podcasts further an organization's artistic and administrative goals?
- What are potential student learning outcomes from incorporating podcast listening or production into your coursework?

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Dr. Xela Batchelder

Dr. Xela Batchelder is an Assistant Professor at Waynesburg University. Her area of expertise is Fringe festivals around the world, particularly the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. She is the Executive Director and co-founder of the Pittsburgh Fringe, and has consulted with many other Fringe Festivals. She is also the Executive Director of Fringe University, an educational program using the Edinburgh Fringe, the largest arts festival in the world, as a classroom. She holds a dual master's degree in English and Art History from University of St Andrews, Scotland, as well as a master's and Ph. D. in Theatre from The Ohio State University.



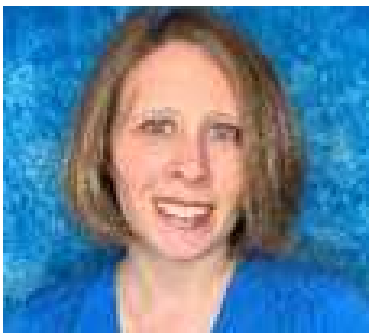
Dr. Brett Ashley

Dr. Brett Ashley Crawford is an Associate Teaching Professor and the Faculty Chair of Arts and Entertainment Management at Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy. Dr. Crawford also serves as the Executive Director of the **Arts Management and Technology Laboratory**. Her areas of expertise include audience engagement, systems theory, gender and management and, of course, technology and the arts. She brings 15 years of professional theatre management experience into the classroom.



Thomas Karr

Thomas Karr is the Director of Graduate Studies in Theatre Management at Wayne State University. His areas of research include audience engagement as a revenue developer, data-driven decision making, and strategic planning. Previously he taught at the University of Alabama and worked professionally for Theatre Development Fund (NYC) and Children's Theatre of Charlotte (NC). He holds an MFA in Theatre Management & Arts Administration from the University of Alabama.



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Brenda Lee Johnston is the Department Chair and an Associate Professor of Arts Administration at Butler University. Prior to joining Butler's faculty, she served as an executive director of community-based performing arts centers. Her areas of expertise include community engagement, programming, board governance, and strategic planning. She holds master's degrees in arts management from Carnegie Mellon University and in Innovation & Organization of Culture and the Arts from the Università di Bologna, and a BA in Arts Management from the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point.



Dr. Amy Shimshon-Santo

Dr. Amy Shimshon-Santo is a writer and educator who believes that the arts and culture are powerful tools for personal and social transformation. Her interdisciplinary work connects the arts, education, and urbanism. She has held educational leadership roles at Claremont Graduate University and the University of California, Los Angeles. Shimshon-Santo earned a Ph.D. and M.A. in Urban Planning from the Luskin School of Public Affairs at UCLA, an MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University, and a BA in Latin American Studies from UC Santa Cruz. Learn more about her work at www.amyshimshon.com.