USQ Exemplars

This section contains a number of exemplars of podcasting and screencasting use at USQ. If you would like to see your work presented here, please contact the author via email: Birgit.Loch@usq.edu.au.

Peter Albion

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<tr>
<td>Summary: Power Point and audio podcasts</td>
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Use of podcasting

- I first used podcasting in 2007 – maybe even back in 2006.
- I use it irregularly. I have used it for short messages about assessment or other things where students appeared to want more information and I could deliver informally.
- I have produced enhanced podcasts using Power Point as the base and ProfCast to do the work. I’m a Mac user.
- **Pedagogical value:** Provides information in a convenient form for access on the go. I usually try to keep them brief and informal.
- I don’t do a lot of editing but I have topped and tailed in GarageBand to make it seem more ‘professional’.

Students

- Students responded very positively once those who have some technical issues get them sorted.
- I think students want convenience of access, information, and a sense of presence from a podcast.
- I started podcasting because this was my way of providing extra information and trying a new technique. Many/most students were unaware of podcasts.
Best practice

- I try to keep my podcasts short.
- I’ve had some technical issues with enhanced podcasts that seem to be problematic for some because they need the right software. I have converted to plain MP3 to assist.

Advice to a lecturer who is just starting to podcast

- Keep it simple. MP3 may be best. Audio is usually sufficient. Many students cannot handle the images that are included in my ProfCast recordings.

Toni Brackin

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<tr>
<td>Summary: Audio podcasts of lectures</td>
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Use of podcasting

- 2009 is my second year of podcasting.
- I either record my on-campus classes or alternatively if there are any problems with the recording or the class wasn’t to my satisfaction, I record a lecture from my desk with reference to PowerPoint slides.
- I provide audio files to students in MP3 format.
- **Pedagogical value:** My reasoning is that it provides students with the opportunity of an on-campus experience. Hearing a lecturer explain a concept, pose questions and relay stories is an entirely different learning experience than reading similar information in a book. I want to save the students time by hopefully predicting some of the questions they may have and explaining them/answering them in a lecture style.
- I use a hand-held digital recorder, and don't edit my recordings.
Students

- I received very positive student evaluation comments in relation to the podcast recordings. The response on the evaluations was quite overwhelming and students really appreciated the extra resource and got a lot out of them.
- The feedback I got from students is that they wanted the podcast to be worth their while in terms of time (i.e. it needed to add something more than what they already had), and that they wanted it to be like a classroom experience. The students preferred the recordings in the classroom even though these were lower audio quality. They specifically said they liked hearing the other students ask questions rather than listening to a static recording in my office.
- Our school records all on-campus lectures in response to competition from other universities that do the same for external and on-campus students (QUT).

Best practice

- I've used the Wimba podcasting tool in the past, and was restricted in terms of file size and length of recording. Now I just record and post the MP3 and don't use Wimba any more. I've had technical issues with Wimba.

Advice to a lecturer who is just starting to podcast

- Don’t try to do everything at once. Choose a small thing that you would like to achieve for the semester and start with that. It might be recording a 10 minute message each week. I think people need to realize that you can’t do everything all at once. When you are comfortable recording short messages, you could move on to recording classroom activities, or you could move on to Camtasia.

Peter Gibbings

Name: Dr Peter Gibbings
Faculty of Engineering and Surveying, Department of Surveying and Spatial Science
Email: peter.gibbings@usq.edu.au
Summary: Breeze recordings
Use of podcasting

- I’ve used Breeze since it was made available at USQ in 2005, the first time I taught the GPS course, and will use Relay and Caplec in the future.
- Pedagogical value: Face to face is different from recording. I don’t record lectures live, because students should not have to sit through a 2 hour lecture recording. Instead, I provide “short and sharp” recordings outside lecture time, breaking the material into 3-4 short 5-10 min recordings. This means that on campus students get more than students who do not attend so there is an incentive to attend.
- I don’t think that editing is efficient – for instance, the content of the GPS course changes every year. If I spend a lot of time editing a recording so it is perfect, it may no longer be relevant next year.

Students

- This is an example for the impact of providing podcasts: I had a student working on the Bielby Project out in the West, who was asking for material on post processing for the Introduction to GPS course. He was given access to the recordings as he was a couple of weeks ahead of others when this material was being taught. This was a big success as he needed no further help.

Best practice

- I’ve published a paper on Breeze + Shockwave quizzes in the GPS course.
- Only record the important bits.
- Make sure your recording is not too long.
- I started recording in the studio, but soon realized that my software and PC were not available there, and I now prefer to record from my own office with my own equipment.
- A recording doesn’t need to be perfect. Students are after information, not a flawless presentation.

Advice to a lecturer who is just starting to podcast

- Go and talk to someone who’s done it!
Michael de Raadt

Name: Dr Michael de Raadt
Faculty of Sciences, Department of Mathematics and Computing
Email: deraadt@usq.edu.au
Summary: Slides+Demos+Audio+Video podcasts, with Camtasia Studio
Exemplar: click here

Use of podcasting

- I've been podcasting since 2007.
- I record lecture slides with audio and video. In the past I have made the recordings available via streaming and zipped. I have started inserting “snippets” of recordings into ICE materials and putting these onto CD. I produce Slides+Demos+Audio+Video podcasts.
- **Pedagogical value:** It provides a format of presentation that suits learning preferences other than text.
- I do some editing, usually to take a long piece and cut it into small chunks.

Students

- My student responses are positive.
- I think the students want an alternative to text. Short, pointed chunks.
- I started to podcast to deliver equivalent content to externals.

Best practice

- I base my practice on VARK.
- My published recordings are no longer than 5min usually
- I've had issues with separating the presenter video from the desktop capture which went out of sync. Audio is always a problem.

Advice to a lecturer who is just starting to podcast

- Get a good webcam and mic. Set up a good production profile. Remember you are not presenting to just the audience in front of you.

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Use of podcasting

- I have been recording lecture audio since S1 2009 when I used Audacity.
- In S2 2009 I am using Camtasia Studio which is a great program but the file size is a problem.
- I have already received a number of comments from students who appreciated the audio embedded with the lectures.
- I have found the use of Bluetooth earpiece and bluetooth dongle to capture the audio a really useful and non intrusive way for my lectures and tutorials.
- In S1 2009 I recorded the audio using Audacity as I did not have access to Camtasia, and produced an MP3 audio file for each lecture.
- **Pedagogical value:** I see this as giving the students the opportunity to have the presentation and conversations of on campus lectures for each module and important events such as discussions and presentation regarding the assignments and examination.
- I don't do much editing. In S1 2009 I asked Jason Myatt to edit the audio files to remove silent sections of the audio. With Camtasia Studio I have been editing my video/audio files myself and find this program relatively easy to use in this regard.

Students

- Student responses are favourable as mentioned above.
- Others have indicated that students prefer the uncut version of a podcast.
- I started podcasting because students are now expecting us to do this and for a number of years I have had students asking for the audio for on campus lectures to be recorded.
think we need to keep up with the changes and evolution in technology and take advantage of technology to add value to the student experience at USQ.

Best practice

- My approach to podcasting has been based on talking with peers as to what is the best approach and what works for them – Aileen Cater-Steel and Birgit Loch and through my own personal experience gained through using the technology in terms of what works and does not work and what can be acceptably accommodated in my busy work week.
- I do endeavour to restrict the length or break up my recording.
- Generally, Audacity and a wireless Bluetooth microphone has worked faultlessly except for one time when my laptop crashed as I lost the sound recording file because I did not realize Audacity keeps a temporary file. So far I have had no problems using Camtasia Studio which is a great program but does take some time to understand the extent of its functionality.

Advice to a lecturer who is just starting to podcast

- Plan your lecture well in advance and be familiar with your content and try to do your lecture as normal, but be aware that you are being recorded so what you are talking about needs to be appropriate. Make sure you familiarise yourself with the technology you are going to use and talk with people who have been using the technology. Enjoy the experience and your students will appreciate the effort on your part.

John Leis

Name: A/Prof John Leis
Faculty of Engineering and Surveying, Department of Electronic and Computer Engineering
Email: john.leis@usq.edu.au
Summary: Developed Caplec screencasting software
Click here for a demonstration of Caplec
Exemplars: click here

Use of podcasting

- I’ve been podcasting since about 2007.
- I record all lectures (which often have a tutorial-type component). I record screencasts with audio, plus annotations as problems are solved, areas highlighted, etc.
● I produce full-screen video capture of any application running. I can also extract audio-only for mobile devices (some students have requested that).

● **Pedagogical value:** The combination of audio and screen is invaluable, and brings to life presentations (I mostly use LaTeX with PDFScreen output). However, it goes further than that – you can explain the use of a software applications (e.g. MATLAB) and thus give “how-to” tutorials. This is invaluable, and saves an awful lot of time in wordy explanations - you can simply “show” a person how to accomplish some task, and look at what the resulting output should be.

● I don’t do any editing. The value is in the spontaneity of the presentation.

### Students

● My students respond overwhelmingly positive, comments of the sort: “can you please get other lecturers at USQ to use Caplec”.

● Distance students want a feeling that they are given similar access to on campus students.

● I developed my own tool – Caplec – to record screen movement. After some suggestions from students about audio recording, I thought I could do better. Then an overseas student who used the prototype system suggested the use of annotation (which was already being considered). It turns out that this was quite difficult to implement technically, but extraordinarily valuable in recordings. Caplec is used by a number of my colleagues in the Faculty of Engineering and Surveying.

### Best practice

● I restrict the length of my recordings to 1 hour max.

● I believe the audio quality is critical.

### Advice to a lecturer who is just starting to podcast

● I can suggest a software package that can make it simpler – have you tried Caplec?
Andrew Maxwell

Name: Dr Andrew Maxwell
Faculty of Engineering and Surveying, Department of Electric, Electronic and Computer Engineering
Email: andrew.maxwell@usq.edu.au
Summary: Audio and video podcasts, and screencasts

Use of podcasting

- I’ve been creating recordings for publishing on the web for 10 years, and I’ve created advanced media files (podcasts) for 4 years.
- USQ Podcasts I create to date are typically for external students in order that they may access on campus lectures. These live lectures and special staff-only recordings (done in a small studio, or other suitable space) are posted onto the LMS and linked into material and concepts that students are currently engaged in. Most notable are the series I have created each semester for the Engineering Problem Solving 1 (ENG1101) course which can at times have 500 enrolled students. Students unable to access these materials online can have smaller lower bit-rate versions emailed as necessary.
- It is anticipated that any publicly accessible lectures will be made available via RSS feeds and iTunesU (iTunes University) however we are not yet ready for that stage.
- I presently create the following types of podcast
  - Audio Only (MP3, AAC, M4A)
  - Widescreen Video (Quicktime, MP4 (M4V))
  - Screen capture (Screen cast)
  - PenCast with Audio (Livescribe Pulse).

  **Pedagogical value:** By creating a connection and inclusion, this encourages learning activities and increases motivation. The actual “Value” is very dependant on the quality of the broadcast, and indeed how podcasts are used by the students. These recordings allow external students to feel like they belong and “connect” with the lecturers at the USQ campus.

- The effort spent in editing before publishing generally depends on the target audience, and the technology chosen. Basic MP3 podcasts can be released with quick editing and normalization, and a check of the content, taking about the time of the actual recording. I.e. a 1 hour recording will generally take another hour of editing, filtering, normalization, adding chapter markers and cover art, and converting to the necessary format.
VodCasts (Video Casts) take more effort. If a series of “casts” are created with the same content (say a MP3, M4A audio, and then MP3 and WMA video) the audio is pre-edited with all necessary stingers and audio additions, and then matched to the video. Additionally any inline video the presenter shows on the screen is embedded as native footage providing the viewer with the best viewing experience. I follow traditional non-linear video editing workflows when creating VodCasts, which results in a significant 2-3 hour editing and production session (a significant bottleneck being that all video is edited in high definition widescreen, resulting in significant slowdowns in the workflow).

Students

- Initial student reaction was excellent, with high hit numbers and general discussion and inter-student encouragement to view these productions. Whilst continued viewing hit numbers are high, ongoing discussion about their content is somewhat reducing.
- It is my opinion that in many instances this type of media (Podcasts, Vodcasts, captures) is somewhat EXPECTED, thus it is taken as a given that this type of material will be provided.
- Students want high production quality, content that is straight to the point, internal navigation of the file (i.e. chapter markers, etc), multiple formats, and iPod/iTunes compatibility.
- I personally continued podcasting at USQ due to prior experience and seeing a need for the content to be created to fill this perceived expectation by students that this media is provided.

Best practice

- A quick look at the literature appears to present significant questions regarding the effectiveness of podcasting in a university environment. Further investigation is warranted here.
- Audio only Podcasts are often shortened by removing stutters, and unnecessary pauses in the audio. This often results in a file 60% the size of the original. I do not slice lecture audio up into fragments as I believe it creates a confusing listening experience. The use of chapter markers (for Apple AAC M4A files) alleviates much of the problems of long podcasts. All day seminars may be broken up into sessions as necessary.
- Audio file sizes are generally restricted to under 20 MB for 1-2 hour lectures.
- From a technology point of view, stationary microphones in a lecture situation are not suitable. Wireless microphones or multiple microphones in large lecture halls are a necessity. Several early podcasts with a stationary microphone were not well recorded and students were quick to complain about the sound quality issues (even after significant editing). Poor quality recordings cannot be improved. The old adage “garbage in – garbage out” holds true, and optimizing the acoustic quality of the raw audio is essential.
Advice to a lecturer who is just starting to podcast

- Quick recordings, whilst being relatively simple to do, can have a negative impact on your course due to a perception of unprofessional content creation. Podcasts should be considered like any other type of publication, and generally should be of an acceptable professional standard. This however is not as difficult as it sounds. Understanding basic concepts and having a sufficient proficiency in computer hardware and software greatly increase the change of success. It is also important to have a documented workflow such that time savings can be utilised rather than re-engineering everything each time.

- In my opinion, professional podcasting requires understanding of basic audio engineering principles, and requires a minimum standard of equipment. Understanding of the following issues is necessary…
  - Audio and video formats;
  - CODECS;
  - Microphone principles;
  - Acoustics, and room echo effects;
  - Audio processing: normalisation, equalization, compression/expansion, ducking (the process where one audio source drops, or ducks, in volume so that another can be heard over the top of it, used for music or auxiliary tracks playing alongside speaker audio); and
  - Multi-track recording and editing.

- Optional issues are…
  - Microphone interfaces (USB, Firewire, Balanced, Unbalanced);
  - Microphone pre-amplification (FET based, Valve based);
  - Multisource analogue mixing;
  - Optimising signal levels;
  - Dynamic effects, normalization, dynamic compression/equalization; and
  - Finalisation (producing professional CD quality final audio).

Further Comments

- It is important to make the distinction between a recording and a podcast. A recording is purely the capture of audio, whereas a Podcast is usually edited to create high production value audio or video that has all the trappings of broadcast quality media, albeit on a smaller scale. I.e. the publication has an introduction explaining the recording, introductions of the speakers, and typically audio stingers (audio/video clips to add interest or create a consistent theme for the podcast series).

- Podcasting is not for everyone. Simple lecture recordings whilst initially being useful, may not add to the overall student experience. Poor audio quality or poor production I feel (personal comment, and common sense statement) often result in significant negative student feeling towards the content.

- If basic recordings are all that is required, a good microphone is recommended, with suitable software (Audacity, GarageBand, ProTools, etc), and if care is taken with the
signal level, as well as editing and processing (usually just compression, and equalization) clean and crisp audio recordings can be created.

- If a series of Podcasts is to be created I recommend investing time creating common content that will be used to promote or “BRAND” the podcast series, with this material woven into every publication, be it the introductory music and message, or the style of the recording. Also in my experience, production of materials such as podcasts on a Macintosh based system is far easier, and has a higher production value than that on a PC, purely based on the software available. Macintosh systems come equipped out of the box with very high quality analogue input and output ports (and optical digital inputs and outputs in most cases) that have a significantly lower noise floor resulting in a much cleaner and musically crisper recording. Also the Macintosh comes with podcasting software out of the box, specifically designed to produce state of the art podcasts in a variety of formats with chaptering, and cover art, stingers, and theme music.

Christine McDonald

Name: Christine McDonald
Faculty of Sciences, Department of Mathematics and Computing
Email: christine.mcdonald@usq.edu.au
Summary: Screencasts with Camtasia Studio
Exemplar: click here

Use of podcasting

- I have been doing screencasts for about 2.5 years
- I use the screencasts to provide extra support to students. These materials include: short videos of worked solutions to maths problems (emailed to an individual student); video instructions of how to use statistical software, video lecture highlights, video of the full lecture (slightly edited in Camtasia Studio) all made available on the web although I am now looking at providing the lecture highlights and software instructions on a CD.
- I mainly use screen capture so that I can utilise the tablet technology for "writing" mathematics.
- Pedagogical value: I find that I am now able to show the development of a solution to a math/stats question rather than just producing the final product.
- I have edited my screencasts mainly to reduce file size while staying true to the purpose of the screencast.
Students

- My students have been very appreciative of having the content presented in this way.
- I think that students appreciate having a more "oncampus experience" of having someone explain the intricacy of a solution - being able to see and hear it explained.
- I started using screencasts because I was involved with others (in particular Birgit Loch) in successfully applying for a Learning and Teaching Grant which gave me access to the appropriate technology - namely tablet technology and Camtasia Studio. Once the students got a taste of it they just wanted more, so I kept trying to improve and expand what I was producing.

Best practice

- I was just trying it out to see what it would be like. I have since looked at the literature to some degree. The references are mainly the ones Birgit Loch has given me but I need to read more.
- I usually don't want my recordings to be longer than 15-20 minutes if possible. I am not convinced that full lectures are the way to go.
- I usually plan my recordings carefully.
- We need to use this a lot more with all levels of our maths/stats courses. This could give us the edge with distance education in maths/stats in Australia.

Advice to a lecturer who is just starting to podcast

- Go for it. It is well worth the effort.

Adrian Stagg

Name: Adrian Stagg
Library, Faculty of Business Librarian
Email:
Summary: Audio only podcasts
Exemplar: Episode 8 (interview with Peter Phillips)
Use of podcasting

- I have been jointly involved in podcasting with Susanne Schultz (Law Librarian) during S1, 2009. Prior to this Susanne and the previous Business Librarian, Ilona Erberle had been producing podcasts. I hadn't been involved with podcasting before this.

- The 'Infocast for Business and Law Students' is used as an awareness-raising exercise. The content is restricted to talking about the use of library resources conceptually, as well as giving an overview of why these resources are required, what the expectations of tertiary study entail and to try and have the students think about evaluating their sources. We've taken the approach of providing basic information for the beginner, as our defined audience was first-year students who may not be aware of the differences in researching assignments at the university level. We had also believed that our online material is utilised more by off-campus students, so we embedded the support role of the Library and the Faculty Librarians into the content to try and encourage students to ask questions and seek help. As the Semester progressed, it became apparent that including LTSU and academic staff in the episodes would be useful. Lindy Kimmins (LTSU) joined us to discuss issues such as referencing, preparing for assignments and dealing with exam stress; whilst some academic staff joined in discussions about what types of resources they believed were appropriate for their students to use. This involvement served as a way of raising the Library profile with other sections of the university, and the interviews with lecturers showed an explicit link between the assessment requirements and use of the library (and the subsequent need to develop student searching and critical evaluation skills). The Podcast is housed on a section of the Library webpage (http://resguide.usq.edu.au/podcasts/?page_id=17) and promoted via two meta-course pages maintained by the Faculty Librarian (Business) and the Law Librarian. Both of these pages are accessible to all students in the respective disciplines and house a range of resources to assist students with the development of information literacy skills within a discipline-specific context.

- The podcasts are available as audio-only, MP3 files. An RSS feed is available for students to be able to subscribe to the podcast.

- Pedagogical value: We have found, anecdotally, that the off-campus students enjoy having library tutorials which are more engaging than a traditional text-only approach. Essentially, these podcasts aim to instil a basic awareness of resources and the need to evaluate and acknowledge these resources and try to highlight the very basic questions student have in their first year whilst transitioning into university. The secondary aim is to have students utilise links found in the 'show notes' for each episode to engage in some self-directed learning if they need/would like to know more. Lastly, the episodes always acknowledge that asking questions is the best way to learn and that the library staff are approachable and have a relevant place in the research process - so students are encouraged to seek help and build their skills.

- I usually do some minor editing to remove longer pauses, certain patterns of speech (excessive 'ums' or 'ahs') and do try to ensure that the sound remains at a consistent level during the recording. I also have pre-recorded introduction and conclusion music/disclaimers that I believe help to 'brand' the podcast and ensure a level of conformity so that they are easily recognisable to students.

- All Infocasts are recorded with Audacity.
Students

- Essentially the information must be relevant to their needs and presented in a manner which isn't dull. We have tried to address both of these needs by always linking the topic of discussion to examples from assessment, or Faculty-based scenarios; we try to ensure that there are multiple presenters to 'break up' the monotony of a single voice, and try to keep it moderately unscripted and conversational where possible. Again, anecdotally, we have heard from members of Faculty that students have provided negative feedback to overly polished, scripted resources as they feel contrived and 'less natural'.

- The Library has been involved in podcasting for three years now. When I joined the Library as Faculty Librarian in 2008, I flagged the podcasts as something which needed redevelopment, but lacked the time until S1, 2009. This gave me sufficient time to examine some of the literature, as well as the practice in other university libraries; and make some changes. The podcasts were developed as a different way to reach students, to make the learning a little more flexible and enter an environment that students may find more appealing.

- The next phase will definitely have to be soliciting feedback from the students and seeing how well the podcasts are being received. There is a gap in our knowledge and processes caused by a lack of this information.

Best practice

- I would suggest this podcasting literature:

- I restrict the length of my recordings. The average episode runs for around 5-7 minutes; interviews run for 10-12 minutes. The aim is to be concise, create a few 'sticky thoughts' and not overwhelm the student with content and new terminology. Besides, Library Research is not an incredibly entertaining subject to listen to. :)

- We're still evaluating our efforts, but the main improvement I'd like to see would be a move to a far more conversational tone for the podcast, to seek more Faculty involvement in their recording and to create a few episodes where we talk to students and involve them in a few episodes.

Advice to a lecturer who is just starting to podcast

- Plan. Know why you want to podcast and make sure that you follow through with the design.
No matter what software you are using, set aside some time to test it, become familiar with it and the equip you'll use and create some test podcasts so that you're not left 'high and dry' during semester.

Make sure that it compliments your teaching, rather than using it because it's technology, and if it isn't appropriate to your needs, don't use it.

Make sure that you try to solicit student feedback, and listen to what the students want.

Create a method of RSS subscription. This makes delivering the content to students easier and they can relax knowing that that the material will arrive on a regular, reliable basis.

The exemplar

I chose this example because it includes academic staff in the discussion so that students could see a link between their coursework and the expectation of use of library resources - as well, the lecturers statements re-enforced the concepts that Susanne and I had been discussing in previous episodes.

Targeted students were first year Business and Law students, in all modes of study.

The topic was using information in Accounting, Economics & Finance courses to support assessment.

I think that this podcast met the aims put forward, and the tone was was suitably informal discussion of the topic. Whilst it was clear that there was a structure, the discussion grew organically, and provided sound advice and treatment of the topic.