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Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How Podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom

Episode 1: Overview and Definitions

By Jennifer L. Bowie

Transcript of the Podcast

<http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/topoi/bowie/ep1.html>

Welcome to “Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How Podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom” a multimodal project exploring podcasting as a part of a writing class. You are listening to Episode 1 “Overview and Definitions.” This is a seven episode podcast series with an interconnected webtext published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. A full transcript of each episode is available on the related website or in the lyrics field of this MP3 file.

I am Dr. Jennifer L. Bowie, your host for this series and a Senior Usability Research Analyst for The Home Depot website. This work draws from my experience as an Assistant Professor at Georgia State University. Inside and outside the academy, I teach and research podcasting, digital media, writing, usability, and rhetoric

In this episode, I first situate podcasting and this article. I next provide some general background and definitions for podcasting. If you are very familiar with podcasting you may want to skip the definitions and 101 part of this episode and move on to episode 2. Without further ado, let us begin episode 1 of “Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How Podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom.”

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Introduction

With an estimated 38.6 million United States listeners in 2011¹, podcasting is no longer an emerging technology. However, podcasting has not yet been incorporated into many writing or even computers and writing classrooms. This may be because, despite the popularity, podcasting is still a young media. But, the newness of media rarely stops those in computers and writing. Perhaps podcasting has not reached the popularity level in writing classrooms in the US because podcasting does not fall into the category of writing as many see it. But, podcasting has much in common with other genres and media in computers and writing. The focus in both areas—podcasting and computers and writing—on audience, content, purpose, tone, text production, style, and effective communication not only mean that the goals are similar, but also that podcasting is a medium that may help us teach these concepts to our students. Podcasting brings us back to our rhetorical roots of spoken argument and texts. Delivery becomes an important canon again, and the remaining four canons may be applied in ways common to both ancient rhetoric and modern multimedia.

In this podcast article, I respond to Barbara Warnick’s call on page 327 of “Looking to the Future” for, [quote] “a move away from printcentric criticism”[unquote]. I examine podcasting as a possible component of the computers and writing classroom. I start with

¹ Based on the 17 million podcast listeners found in Price, A., Gay, P. and Searle, T. (2006. “A History and Assessment of the Slacker Astronomy Podcast” *Astronomy Education Review*, 1.5) for 2006 and multiplied by the growth rate of 18% cited in Lewin (2007. “Podcasting Audience Up 18% Since Last Year” <http://www.podcastingnews.com/2007/03/22/podcasting-audience-up-18-since-last-year/>) for 2007, and then multiplied by this same growth rate for 2008 and 2009.

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a brief discussion of what podcasting is and provide explanations for other terms I use. If you are familiar with podcasting, you may want to skip my general podcasting discussion. If so, go to episode 2, or keep listening to see how I define podcasts. In episode 2, I provide a short review of the limited empirical research on podcasting in classrooms and draw on some more general scholarship on digital media. Next in episodes 3 through 6, I address how podcasting may be used in classrooms to help students rethink the “old” writing concepts we have been teaching, such as the five canons and audience, tone, purpose, and context, in new ways and consider how students may bring the lessons they learned from podcasting back to their print text writing. I draw on student work for examples of how students are learning through podcasting. In episode 3 I introduce the concept of rethinking the old in new ways and begin discussing the canon with invention. In episode 4, I discuss the next two canons: arrangement and style. I finish the canons in episode 5 with memory and delivery. In episode 6, I move to “Other Writing Skills: Audience, Purpose, Context, and Tone.” I wrap up the series in episode 7. In the transcript on the webtext and lyrics field of this podcast I provide a full works cited and list of relevant links.

[Musical transition]

Podcasting 101 & Definitions

Podcasting is a somewhat controversial term. The term “podcasting” was created in 2004, slightly after Adam Curry’s iPodder software was first available to download and transfer podcasting files, according to Rob Walch and Mur Laffery. The term is generally considered to be a portmanteau of **iPod** and **Broadcast**. However, Dannie Gregorie, the

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first person to use the term, according to Morris and Terra, did not have the iPod in mind when coining the term. It has since been backronymed as **Personal On-Demand broadcasting** or, possibly better yet, according to Morris and Terra, **Personal On-Demand narrowcasting**. Narrowcasting is a more accurate term as it refers to distributing content to a select, narrow audience, whereas broadcasting refers to delivering content to a wide audience, such as everyone who receives the TV or radio signal.

Of course, what the term represents does not alone define it. Podcasts are episodic digital media files distributed over the internet. They are downloaded through web syndication—often RSS feeds or podcatcher software (like iTunes). Normally the files are assumed to be audio or video files, and many people think this is all a podcast is. While podcasts are generally audio or video files, they can be any type of file: .pdfs, .docs, .ppt, .rtfs .pdfs, doc files, PowerPoints, rich text files], and more. These files are different than webcasts or audio or video posted online in that they are normally distributed file-based downloads and not streaming files accessed through a site such as YouTube or a blog. While closely related, podcasts are different from blogs and other digital media that can be subscribed to with RSS. Podcasts are designed to be delivered when published to the subscriber’s computer, mp3 player, phone or other device, whereas most blogs and other digital media are designed to be accessed through their site. Podcasts that have been delivered to a computer, mp3 player, phone or other device can then be listened to or watched “anytime anywhere” without internet access. However, blogs and other digital media a user subscribes to often cannot be accessed without an internet connection. Although the differences are blurring as media

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technologies advance and as many podcasts have corresponding blog sites, the two key differences of delivery and anytime anywhere access still make podcast distinct.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of podcasting, especially from an educational standpoint, is the time- and location-shifted aspects of the texts. People may listen anytime, anywhere—they are not chained to a specific time or place. Since many podcasts may be listened to on MP3 players or cell phones, there are increased opportunities to listen wherever. Suddenly students may access their texts while driving, running, doing chores, and so on, which increases their opportunities for learning. This is key for nontraditional students who may have additional time constraints.

In this article, I focus on audio podcasts and sometimes video podcasts. I am examining these two types of podcasts because they are the most common. They are also more distinct from other digital media than podcast Word documents or rich text files, which are too similar to the paper texts our students create. In addition, audio and video podcasts are more closely related to each other and to the ancient rhetorical speeches since the text is, at least in part, spoken. Plus, it is easiest to focus on these two rather than the entire range of distributed media. Discussion of all possible file types is beyond the scope of this article and outside the scope of my experience with podcasts. From this point forward, whenever I say podcast I mean video and audio podcasts specifically.

In this text I discuss two main types of “classroom” podcasts: teacher-produced podcasts and student-produced podcasts. While the terms are fairly self-explanatory, there are a few concepts necessary to explore. In both cases, these are podcasts created for, or as a part of, the class. Teacher-produced podcasts are obviously created by the teacher,

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possibly in association with others, and are for the students. These may be recordings of lectures, supplemental material, “readings” in podcast form composed by the teacher, and other various podcast texts the teacher created for the students. In the still limited scholarship on podcasts in education, generally the podcasts are of this type—teacher-produced—and are often recorded lectures.

Student-produced podcasts are, not surprisingly, produced by the students and are often course requirements in some ways. These podcasts may be composed by a group of students or a single student and may be informal and barely edited—like a journal entry or daily reading response—or very formal polished texts—like the final written course paper. I focus on this type of podcast in this article, as it is through composing texts, whether written, podcast, or in some other form, that our students learn the most. In addition, there is very little scholarship on student-produced podcasts.

Another type of podcast is externally-produced podcasts, which are not created for the class but by outsiders not associated with the class and for other reasons. These podcasts may be required or recommended texts for the class. One example may be the very popular [Grammar Girl](#) podcast, which I require a subscription to in several of my undergraduate courses. These are often good texts in that they are free and the student may access them anytime anywhere with MP3 players and other devices. Also, these work well as examples of various rhetorical concepts like style and arrangement. While these may be strong additions to a writing class, my focus in this article is on student-produced podcasts.

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I discuss these three types in more detail in the companion piece to this text,

“Podcasting in a Writing Class? Considering the Possibilities”

<http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/praxis/bowie>.

As Shankar stated on page 375 of “Speaking on Record” [quote] “Words such as writing, speaking, and talking are complex and polysemous, leaving no clear way to describe related—but new—activities” [end quote] . This issue is one I found problematic when discussing podcasts as texts. I found it hard to differentiate between these aural texts and the more traditional visually-accessed texts such as print texts, websites, blogs, wikis, and so on. While these more traditional texts are generally primarily visually accessed, they should not lightly be combined with other types of visually-accessed texts including paintings, photographs, and icons—texts that may not use words primarily or at all to communicate. What is important in these traditional visually-accessed texts and podcast texts is generally the primary form of communication is words, so I needed a term to differentiate the traditional visually-accessed texts from both the aural text of podcasts and the visual and non word-based texts of images. Thus, I focused on a key element in these more traditional texts—typography—and developed the term typographic-based texts to represent print texts, blogs, websites, wikis, and other visually-accessed texts that use words as a primary means of communication.

This ends my definitions of podcasting, classroom podcast types, and typographic-based texts. Next, in episode 2, I will explain the literature on podcasting in education. Do check out episodes 2 through 7 to find out more about how podcasting fits into the writing classroom. In episode 3, I begin the discussion of “Rethinking the Old in New

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Ways” and delve into invention. I discuss arrangement and style in episode 4 and finish the five canons in 5 with memory and delivery. In 6, I explore other writing skills: audience, purpose, context, and one. I wrap it up in episode 7 with my conclusions. These all are, of course, part of the multimodal text “Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom.”

This multimodal text was published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. Please check out the full webtext on *Kairos* at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/topoi/bowie>. Full reference information, transcript, and links are available in the webtext and also in the lyrics field of the MP3. All student samples in this podcast were used with full permission. The music used in this podcast is “6” off *Ghosts I* by Nine Inch Nails, which is available under an [Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike Creative Commons License](#).

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Thanks for listening!

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Album Art

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- ◆ Ruhsam, William. (2008). "AKG Perception 220 Microphone." Posted 8/17/2008 on Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/bruhsam/3031270525/> with an Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 2.0 Generic Creative Commons License.
- ◆ Brassey, Anna a. (1878-83). Illustration from *A Voyage in the Sunbeam, our Home on the Ocean for Eleven Months*. Image is in the public domain. Artist may not be Brassey, but no other information was available. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anna_Brassey_438-victorian-woman-writing-jornal.gif

Links

Grammar Girl podcast: <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/>

References

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Walch, Rob, & Lafferty, Mur. (2006). *Tricks of the Podcasting Masters*. Toronto: Que.