

Teens Podcasting @ your library®

A Getting Started Guide

In this guide, librarians will learn what a podcast is, how they can be used to connect with teens, and the basic steps for creating a library podcast.

What Is a Podcast?

Podcasts are digital recordings that are made available on the Internet for downloading to a personal computer or portable audio player using an RSS feed. Simply put, they are digital audio files that are created to be heard and shared. People use podcasts to present content on a wide range of topics such as local news, music, recipes, or as a forum to provide personal commentary. Although podcasts originated in the private sector, they are now used as communication tools by businesses and educational and government organizations as well.

Podcasts are “casted” over the course of several episodes, much like a radio show is broadcast in daily, weekly, or monthly segments. Listeners can subscribe to their favorite podcasts with “podcatchers” such as *iTunes*. Each time a new episode is released, the podcatcher will be updated with new content.

The word “podcast” comes from a combination of the name of Apple’s iPod portable media player and the shortening of the word “broadcast.”

Why Begin a Podcast?

Teen librarians are beginning to use podcasts as a way to involve and empower the teens that they serve with technology. Teens can create podcasts to express their opinions and share their voice regarding personal interests and passions.

There are a number of constructive projects that teens can get involved with when creating podcasts:

- Record live reports of special events such as teen talent shows, video game tournaments, and author talks.
- Provide teen-driven reader’s advisory in the format of recorded book talks and reviews of teen novels, manga, music CDs, audiobooks, and films.
- Showcase creative writing where teens share essays, poems, short stories, and excerpts from novels they have written.
- Support teen culture by recording discussions, news, and reports about the every day life of the teenagers in your community.
- Archive meaningful stories from their lives as an oral history. (See Librarians’ Internet Index [Oral history link](#) and this [Step-by- Step Guide to Oral History](#).)

Planning a Teen Podcast

The very first step in planning a teen podcast is to meet with teens in your community. Find out their interest in and commitment to recording a podcast. You and the teens will need to come to a consensus on the following points:

- What subjects and content will be covered in the podcast?
- What type of training is needed so that the group can get started with podcasting?
- What is the name of the podcast and how often will the episodes be produced?
- Who is the audience for the podcast?
- Who is responsible for writing content? Who is responsible for editing? Who is responsible for promoting the finished product?

When podcasting with teens, it’s best to follow a youth participation model in which the teens are the driving force behind the content, production, and promotion. A show created by teens for teens is more likely to be listened to than a podcast created for teens by librarians.

Producing a Podcast

The good news is that podcasting equipment is relatively inexpensive, and sometimes completely free if you already own a PC microphone.

Basic tools for podcast creation include:

- PC microphone
- Recording/editing Software
- Computer

Microphones

PC microphones can be built-in or external. For more information on the different types of microphones that can be used, read Bart Farkas’ chapter on [podcasting equipment](#) from Peach Pit Press.

Production Software

Garage Band runs on Apple’s MAC OS platform and is known for being a simple and intuitive production tool for podcasting. The program comes preinstalled on most MAC OS systems, and is conveniently equipped with built-in sound clips.

Windows or Mac OS users can download a free audio production program called *Audacity*. There are many web tutorials on using Audacity to create podcasts, but the best place to start is with the software-supported tutorials.

Hot Tip: When using Audacity for creating podcasts, be sure to download and install the [LAME .mp3 Encoder](#). The LAME Encoder is a simple plug-in software that converts Audacity project files (.aup) into the .mp3 format generally used for podcasting.

Recording Telephone Interviews for Podcasts

Interviews are a way of making podcasts dynamic. For example, teens can interview an author and showcase the discussion in a podcast. Internet telephony software can be used to place calls over the internet and recording software is used to capture the audio conversation.

An easy way to accomplish this is to use the Internet Telephony application [Skype](#) in conjunction with [Skype Recorder](#) for Windows or [Call Recorder](#) for Mac OS. The article [15 Apps for Recording Skype Conversations](#) provides more software options for both Mac and Windows.

The Recording and Editing Process

Recording and editing can be very simple with programs such as Garage Band and Audacity. Here are some tips that take you beyond simple production:

- Copyrighted music should be cleared by the rights holder prior to inclusion in the podcast.
- Encourage teens to contact the artists or record labels for permission, or, better yet, make their own music!
- Stay focused. While a script is not necessarily required, a good outline can make a much smoother, efficient recording session.
- Volume levels should be kept as consistent as possible. If the final volume levels are set too high, it could be painful to listen to, and if they are set too low, it will be hard to hear the content. Additionally, if more than one person is speaking through the course of the podcast, make sure the placement of the microphone is such that it will pick up all voices equally. A process called “normalizing” can help bring extreme differences in volume levels back under control. Making a short test recording before each session can help to ensure proper recording levels.
- The “bit rate” for the final recording is a measurement of how much data is processed for each second of playback. The higher the bit rate is, the bigger the file will be. For recordings that heavily feature music, the generally accepted minimum bit rate is 192 kb/s, and for spoken word recordings with minimal music, bit rates of 32 kb/s or 64 kb/s are acceptable.
- A device known as a pop filter is often placed between the microphone and the speaker to prevent the amplification and recording of unintended phonetic sounds. Music stores sell these filters for around \$20; however they can be made quite cheaply with an embroidery hoop and nylon fabric, and can make a major difference in the quality of vocal recordings.

Publishing the Podcast

When the podcast is ready for publication, then it's time to examine hosting options for storing and distributing the podcast to your listeners. You will need to find a host (or web server) that is reliable and in many cases inexpensive (or free!). One of the best free hosting options with unlimited storage and streaming is the Internet Archive, located at <http://archive.org>.

The Internet Archive is more than a hosting Web site — it is a digital library of cultural artifacts. By uploading teen-created podcasts to the Internet Archive, you help build and provide access to a collection of materials that represent today's youth culture. Imagine historians and scholars researching teen culture by listening to podcasts created by teens in your library!

Creating the Subscription Feed

Once you have found a suitable host for the first episode, you are ready to create a subscription feed. Any time you publish a new episode, the feed is updated and your fans receive the new content through their podcatchers.

Creating a subscription feed is as easy as setting up a blog. Each time a new episode is published, you can use the blog to create an update that links to the new episode. Each blog update is included in the subscription feed that your fans subscribe to in their podcatchers. The subscription feed generates links to the various episodes (that are based on your blog updates) so that listeners can download the new audio. [Blogger](#) is an easy-to-use and free platform for publishing a podcast blog and subscription feed.

[Feedburner](#) is another RSS tool, used for managing and fine-tuning the settings of your podcast feed. For more information about creating a subscription feed with Blogger and Feedburner, visit the [Podcasting News Web site](#).

Promoting the Podcast

Once the podcast has been created, there are several ways to get the word out. Consider the following ideas:

- Create business cards and posters promoting the podcast. Let teens hand out business cards to their friends. Hang up posters at local schools and community organizations.
- Create a presence on MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, or other profile pages. Facebook and Bebo both have podcasting applications that can be installed on your profile and used to showcase the podcast.
- Submit the subscription feed to podcast directories and networks such as [iTunes](#), [Odeo](#), and [Podcast Pickle](#). **HOT TIP:** your podcast is more likely to be accepted on some of these networks if it has about five episodes under its belt.
- Consider contacting the local media about the podcast, especially newspapers and community TV shows. Contact your community radio station to see if they will broadcast an episode on the air.

Podcasting Resources

Web Resources

Interview with Sarah Kline Morgan. A YALSA Podcast interview with Sarah Kline Morgan regarding the Cheshire Public Library Podcast http://pod-serve.com/audiofile/filename/7690/ttw_youth_part.mp3

Cheshire Public Library Podcast. A podcast created by teens of the Cheshire Public Library. www.cheshirelib.org/teens/cplpodcast.htm

Teen Podcasters Network. A community network that features podcasts created by teenagers. www.teenpodcasters.com

Creating a Podcast with Audacity on a Windows PC. A video tutorial created by staff at Penn State University. <http://podcasts.psu.edu/pcaudacity>

Podcast Software. A comprehensive list of podcasting software. www.podcastnews.com/topics/Podcast_Software.html

Podcasts & Teens – Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki. A directory of podcasts created by teens in libraries. www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=Podcasts_%26_Teens

Podcasting 101 for K-12 Librarians. An article from Information Today that addresses the who what when where

and how of podcasting with youth, written from a K-12 education perspective. www.infoday.com/cilmag/apr06/Eash.shtml

Podcasting Toolkit. Mashable's podcasting toolkit provides links to social networking tools that can be used in creating, hosting, and sharing podcasts. <http://mashable.com/2007/07/04/podcasting-toolbox/>

Print Resources

Access this guide on the YALSA wiki to view more resources and add ideas of your own.

A-Podcasting We Will Go. (2007). *Smart Libraries*. 27(1), 6.

Abram, S. (2006). Information Tech - Podcasting: The Short Course. *Information Outlook: the Monthly Magazine of the Special Libraries Association*. 10(3), 34.

Braun, L. W. (2007). Listen up! Podcasting for schools and libraries. Medford: Information Today.

Murdock, J. (2006). On Air at the Library: Teens Sound Off Through Podcasting. *Voice of Youth Advocates : VOYA*. 29(5), 402-403.

Richardson, W. (2006). Blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other powerful webtools for classrooms. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.