Podcasting Computer Science E-1

Computer Science E-1: Understanding Computers and the Internet
Harvard Extension School
www.computerscience1.org

SIGCSE
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David J. Malan
Division of Engineering and Applied Sciences
Harvard University
malan@post.harvard.edu

with
Rei Diaz
Dan Armendariz
Eugenia Kim
Chris Thayer
The Podcast

Many students accessed it via iTunes.
The Podcast

It's simply an RSS feed.

```xml
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<rss xmlns:itunes="http://www.itunes.com/dtds/podcast-1.0.dtd" version="2.0">
  <channel> [...] 
    <item>
      <title>Lecture 1 (video): Hardware</title> [...] 
      <itunes:author>David J. Malan</itunes:author>
      <itunes:duration>1:43:43</itunes:duration>
      <enclosure url="http://www.courses.dce.harvard.edu/~cscie1/podcasts/lecture1.mov"
        type="video/quicktime"
        length="210092794" />
      <pubDate>Thu, 22 Sep 2006 19:30:00 EST</pubDate>
    </item> [...] 
  </channel>
</rss>
The Podcast

45% of students used the podcast for review, 18% as an alternative to attendance.

“I love this feature, I have an hour to an hour and a half commute each way to work everyday and to have the podcasts helped with reviewing the lectures (on the go).”

“I think it was also very much in line with the course curriculum to have students learn about and use the technologies that are available, including the iPod. How very cutting edge we were!”

“It’s simply a good way to review and listen to lectures.”
The Podcast

Most students watched or listened on their computer, not iPod.

[Bar chart showing the number of students using different devices to watch or listen to podcasts]

- Computer: 15 students
- Audio-only iPod: 4 students
- Video iPod: 2 students
The Podcast

Enthusiasm != Usage.

“I really liked [the] concept of using podcasting as an educational medium. It extends the reach in very affordable ways... I think I only listened to one podcast and none of the videos.”

“I think podcasting is a good idea. The more formats information is made available in, the better. However, I did not listen to any of the podcasts.”
The Podcast

Logs suggest 6,000 – 10,000 subscribers between September 2005 and September 2006.
The Podcast

Subscribers were from over 50 countries.

- United States (62%)
- Other Countries (21%)
- United Kingdom (5%)
- Canada (4%)
- Japan (3%)
- Australia (3%)
- Germany (2%)
The Podcast

Emails from Subscribers

“I live in the central interior of British Columbia, Canada, and am surrounded by forest, the nearest town is twenty minutes drive. . . . I pay a great deal of money to connect to the Internet via satellite. . . . I consider the lessons I have learned from you and your colleagues to have completed paid for this service.”

“I would like to thank you for posting your . . . lectures . . . as podcasts. The commute to Cambridge from . . . Israel is a bit too much for me to attend the course in person. Nevertheless, your podcasts have been a great ‘second best.’”
The Value

Overstated with hype?

“Could ivy-covered lecture halls become as obsolete as the typewriter?”

Newsweek, 28 November 2005
The Value

Podcasting (or future equivalent) offers universities new opportunities to teach populations at large.
The Issues

Perhaps best tackled on a course-by-course basis.

- Production Costs
  - Storage
  - Bandwidth
- “Branding”
- Will students stop attending?
- Who owns the content?
- Uttering Mistakes (and Opinions) on Camera
- Students’ Privacy
- Fair Use
- “I paid $40,000 for those classes.”
- …
Conclusions

Podcasting (or future equivalent)...

- ... is a marginal improvement on trends long in progress.
- ... is perhaps a “next best thing” for those for whom attendance is simply not possible.
- ... offers to extend universities’ reach more than it offers to improve education itself.
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