

Preserving Podcasts in Institutional Repositories

October 2021

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Introduction

In response to the 2020 global pandemic, the University of Minnesota Archives sought to gather digital content documenting the public health crisis and institutional response to COVID-19. Staff identified university-produced podcasts from several departments as information-rich contemporaneous content that was also at high risk of loss. We determined that these podcasts should be preserved in our institutional repository, as we came to see institutional podcasts more broadly as a digital serial publication. Our focus is now on the ongoing maintenance of podcasts as a serial publication in the repository and demonstrating to content producers the value of preserving podcasts to recruit other material for the repository.

Podcasts as digital serial publications

In their 2011 article on podcasts as an informational resource, Brock Peoples and Carol Tilley identify the institutional podcast, podcasts created by faculty or departments at academic institutions, as a new form of grey literature—an informal or otherwise unpublished scholarly work—similar to the types content "libraries collect and preserve directly or manage in institutional repositories."¹ Many of these early institutional podcasts consisted of course lectures or supplemental information for course curriculum or published works.

Today, institutional podcasts follow a more episodic format and appeal to a wider audience beyond a classroom or the institution. Institutional podcasts have a production quality and broad appeal that make them more synonymous with a serial publication. The contemporaneous focus of much of the content means these podcasts provide an evidentiary and historical value of events and people worthy of long-term preservation and access. The use of an institutional repository (IR) to preserve podcasts provides many of the same benefits as for other types of repository content, including link and citation permanence.

Review of podcasts in institutional repositories

In 2010, staff at the Bentley Historical Library conducted a review of podcasts at the University of Michigan and undertook steps toward a systematic effort to plan for the appraisal, ingest,

¹ Brock Peoples & Carol Tilley (2011) "Podcasts as an Emerging Information Resource," *College & Undergraduate Libraries* 18:1, 44-57, DOI: 10.1080/10691316.2010.550529.

retention, and dissemination of podcasts in the institutional repository.² This approach evaluated podcasts based on a functional documentation analysis.

At the University of Georgia, staff in the Law Library created two pilot podcasts with available studio technology to demonstrate the use of the equipment to encourage adoption by the faculty and school. The podcast "On Reserve" featured law library staff and faculty discussing topics tied to the library's collections or their expertise. Initially distributed through traditional podcasting syndication services, the podcasts were added to their repository in order to link the podcast content with the other scholarship available in their repository.

At the University of Massachusetts Amherst, repository staff sought to leverage the IR as a podcast platform syndicating content via RSS feeds and sending metadata to Spotify and iTunes for additional discovery and distribution. Staff see the repository as a common good tool whose cost is absorbed by the library and can be made freely available for the campus.

Approach to capturing podcasts

We started looking at podcasts in response to the 2020 global pandemic. Most university-produced podcasts pivoted in some way to address the effects of the pandemic, and these were identified by University of Minnesota Archives staff as information-rich contemporaneous content that was also at high risk of loss. While we sought to gather digital content documenting the public health crisis and institutional response to COVID-19, we also wanted to make sure that we were capturing these university-produced podcasts as a complete series, and not just individual episodes.

In order to identify additional university-produced podcasts and gain permission from podcast creators to add these series to our institutional repository, we conducted a campus-wide survey in May 2020. Between Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, we used the information from the survey responses to locate files, metadata, and transcripts (if available) across various podcast platforms for upload. Podcast series were uploaded both manually and through batch imports, depending on the size of the series. This work was split between two graduate student interns and three members of University Archives staff.

On-going Considerations

Through this initial work, we uploaded close to 800 individual podcast episodes, and have continued to catch up with more frequently-released series. New episodes can accumulate quickly, which requires ongoing maintenance of these serial digital publications in our repository. This maintenance includes locating or generating transcripts for older episodes, and reaching out to podcast creators. Our focus is now on demonstrating the preservation of podcasts as an outreach tool to content producers to recruit other material for the repository.

² Alexis A. Antracoli (2010) "Podcasts in the Archives: Archiving Podcasting Content at the University of Michigan," *Society of American Archivists Campus Case Studies*, Case 12, <https://www2.archivists.org/publications/epubs/Campus-Case-Studies>.