

# Podcasting: The Process Of Creating A Digital Narrative

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A Master's Project

Presented to

School of Arts and Science

State University of New York

Polytechnic Institute

Utica, NY

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In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the requirements for the  
Master of Science Degree

By

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December 2016

SUNY POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE  
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY  
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Approved and recommended for acceptance as a thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Science in Information Design and Technology

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## Abstract

Podcasts are an emerging and quickly growing form of information design to deliver some sort of message to a listener. The purpose of that message may be to teach, inform, discuss social happenings, narrate their life, talk to guests, tell stories, and so much more. Being able to speak to people in an organic, stream of conscious format, allows for a feeling of comfort and ease of listening. There's many steps in order to create this digital narrative from starting a blog to host a podcast, recording and editing an episode, uploading to iTunes, and more. This paper is a complete overview of a digital media package including a website, blog, and podcast. You will learn the process of creating the site, recording a podcast, editing, music production, uploading to the site and then iTunes, Apple approval, and experiences had. Also there is an in depth view of motives of creating a podcast, influences, things learned.

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## Introduction

While the definition of a Podcast seems to always be evolving, I feel that it is a verbal information technology designed to provide on demand content to masses of people. There are seemingly infinite reasons to conduct and/or listen to a podcast ranging from news delivery to pure entertainment fluff. And now that there are so many names in the industry making big money with the medium, it's a bigger than ever industry. Podcasts fill a niche for me that I can't quite get out of other forms of information technologies due to accessibility and availability. The fact that you can listen to a podcast on next to every web ready, handheld device whenever you want makes them my go-to source for auditory bliss. Not to mention that I am able to pick and choose various episodes from any podcaster based on topics covered in that episode makes it a no brainer for me. After being a long time enthusiastic listener, I decided to jump into the deep end of the creation end of them. But what would take me from being an avid listener to a curious creator? Why would I go through the hassle and trouble of researching something that is done by the professionals I listen to? How did I implement all of the things I learned? What kind of experiences or lessons learned did I run into? And How did I use my own Podcast as a **personal storytelling vehicle?** The answers to these questions do not have an ending necessarily as I'm still learning but I've got many experiences to share! What my thesis is

composed of is a fully functional website with a domain name I own, a blog to document every step of the way, and my podcast episodes which can be listened to off the site or on iTunes.

## Why Podcast?

### Brief Personal History of Podcasting Influences

Surprisingly, I used to hate the thought of Podcasts. Actually, I used to hate listening to spoken word in general. They made me think of lectures. Lectures and me are not friends nor do we play nice together. You may be asking yourself how I came to start listening. It definitely didn't start with podcasts. I have an uncle who was, for many years, a die-hard fan of Howard Stern's radio program. For years my uncle would try and get me to listen; explaining to me how amazing and funny his show was. But, because of my distaste for the spoken word, I fought it; hard. Fast forward a few years to me getting my first vehicle that had a trial version of Sirius XM Radio included. So I gave The Howard Stern Show a try since I had nothing to lose. Much to my surprise, he wasn't only interesting, but wildly fascinating. It was unlike anything I've ever listened to. Between his brilliance, wittiness, and cast of crazy characters/staffers, I got hooked almost immediately. Everyday I continued to be impressed and surprised and it turned me into a Howard Stern addict; getting anxious when I'd miss an episode. However, I still had no desire to jump into the Podcast medium. Looking back, Howard Stern is more of a paid subscription, high end Podcast than a radio show. Stern and his band of personalities held me over for a few years until I joined a new gym. Long story short, I was turned onto a "podcast" while at this

gym about the style of fitness I did. This was a podcast that was also videotaped so you could watch. It is called Barbell Shrugged(BBS) and it's all about Crossfit, Humor, Spirituality(not religion), and good times all around. It featured 3 main players: Mike Bledsoe, Chris Moore, Doug Larson. These three were the perfect blend of educated knowledge bombs, fantastic sarcasm, and good laughs. It made for an informational, humor filled show about a style of fitness I was really interested in and passionate about. The episodes included interviews with smart people in the field, motivational monologues, and a lot of fun talk about eating unhealthy food/vices. They injected so much of their personalities in this show that it was so much more than interviews and banter. They really loved what they were doing and it showed in all the laughs they had and ribbing they did with each other. I slowly started to realize I wasn't necessarily so against spoken word when it was presented to me in a way that was conversational and funny at the same time. Now I had Stern and BBS at my helm yet, I wasn't interested in anything else. I felt content getting the brilliance and comedy from Stern + fitness humor from BBS was more than enough. This held me over for a while as I increasingly got more sucked into this world of information, comedic spoken word. Eventually a friend at my gym tried to turn me onto a podcast called The Joe Rogan Experience. His claims were that Rogan's show featured information that would blow my mind and keep me entertained for hours ranging from fitness to self actualization to great humor. I figured what's to lose so I tuned in to an episode; or at least I tried. Not sure why, but I couldn't get into it. It was more of a conversation with him and his guests and apparently I wasn't ready for it. So I bailed and went back to my comfort zone. Some time later a manager at one of my jobs wouldn't stop gushing over how brilliant Rogan was and how information packed his episodes were. He claimed he constantly was learning new stuff after every episodes and he had really amazing comedy stand up acts on which injected all the humor into it. I then decided, stop being stubborn and give it

another shot. I scrolled through Rogan's episode list; which spanned over 800 episodes in the past few years; and found an episode where he was talking to Whitney Cummings. I was a big fan of Whitney Cummings both because she was very funny and quite beautiful. Also, she's been on Stern multiple times which is where I knew her from. 20 minutes into the episode, I was sold. I just needed the right bait to get me to listen, and once I was hooked, he reeled me right into the boat. They were discussing all of these topics about human evolution and how our minds are mirrors to that of an earlier version of man. How we have all these new stimulus that the prior man didn't have like cell phone screens and social media that are clogging up our head and affecting biological processes in us ranging from sleep issues, to mental addictions. They had me. I've always been an inner thinker trying to play self therapist and figure out why I do the things I do or think the way I think. I've been into trying to optimize my mind for a while and determine what things in my life were holding me back in various areas. I've since recommended this episode to anybody who is interested in these topics and the idea of being a very deep, inner thinker such as myself. Rogan is a wildly curious person and you can tell by how far down the rabbit hole he goes when he talks about a topic of interest to him. I now added Rogan to my list of addictions and I was officially a Podcast enthusiast in constant search of other podcasts that would really engage my mind in ways I wasn't getting from real life interactions. The last huge name I added to this list was Bill Burr's Monday Morning Podcast. I've been a solid fan of Burr's stand up comedy specials for years; always claiming he's among the top brilliant comedians. A friend of mine turned me onto his podcast claiming it's just Burr talking into a microphone, complaining about things that irritate him, but with the same comedic sense that he would on stage. Again, I listened and was sold. Burr has a delivery and wittiness to his banter that is unrivaled by anybody else. He has zero guests, not much of any editing, and doesn't go over one hour on his episodes. He really just talks about what he's done in the

past few days and upcoming standup shows. But he is so mentally quick that he can say the most outrageous things at the snap of a finger. The rest is really history. I've added tons of podcasts to my bank including topics such as video game news, comedians, informational podcasts, life hacking, and more. It then became time for me to venture into creating my own. What would I even talk about? I have no following or any idea at all if I could hold a conversation with myself; which leads me to the next step of why I'm choosing to podcast.

## Podcasts Are A Great Storytelling Vehicle

There's a general theme to the way I podcast and to the podcasts that interest me the most. It's the idea of using the podcast as a vehicle to tell a story about yourself. It is not scripted and it is not rehearsed. It is off the cuff, organically spoken, and a stream of consciousness. My top three favorites noted already; Stern, Burr, Rogan; all, use a microphone to talk through their thoughts. They talk to the mic like they would talk to another person; and in Rogan's case, he does talk to other people. I find them to be three individuals who look for greater meanings in absolutely everything and like to explore the why's and how's of things. They flesh out ideas and are sometimes even surprised by what they come up with. To me, this takes a substantial amount of self awareness, humility, and curiosity. I look up to people with great reverence who are able to dig deep and really talk. There is no plan beyond maybe having a general idea on where they want to start and just let the narrative go where it goes. There are other styles of podcasts that take a different approach. They would be scripted, rehearsed, narratives.

Podcasts like Serial or This American Life which are highly rated, if not top tier recordings that come to mind; they're just not for me. I do not like listening to the sound of somebody reading a script. There is no feeling or heart into it and I'm bored very early on. The subject matter is irrelevant whether it appeals to me or not, if they are reading it from a page. I like to see how

thought develops on the fly because I'm attracted to wittiness, quickness, brilliance with the way they carry their words. I like to think deep myself but currently only have one outlet that effectively gets my thoughts out the way I'm thinking them. That is blogging. I've found over the past 2 years of Graduate School and multiple assignments involving writing blog posts in my own "voice," that I have an ability to write creatively about myself and my life or topics of general interest to me. I don't see that as a self-absorbed or selfish feeling either. And I don't always consider every topic I can blog about to be related to me specifically. It's more having the ability to write in a way that mirrors the way I'd say something to somebody in person. Stream of conscious, writing about topics. I don't like to be formatted or held to any specific writing style. I purely like to write like I would talk. Building a running dialogue only seems natural to me if I'm able to speak on the fly. Trying to write things down tends to not feel so natural as it allows for editing and too much focus is put on perfection. When so much thought goes into carving a thought down to what would be considered "ideal," it takes mental effort away from the point to the idea in general. I know I'm not a great verbal communicator, so to hear other people be able to speak efficiently, with no script, I am immediately drawn in due to my desire to emulate that some day. In short, podcasting is a vehicle for personal storytelling, open narrative, stream of consciousness. Being able to tell your story can have endless therapeutic effects since it allows you to get stuff out opposed to holding it in. It allows you to really examine your life, almost like meditation, and come to personal conclusions about things. I feel that everyone can be a deep thinker, but not everyone takes the time to ask the why's and how's to things. Not everyone is self aware or curious. Being able to tell your story opens up curiosities in the mind and get you to start asking all those questions. While I'm working on improving my ability to connect my thought process to my speech, I'm also trying to narrow the gap between how I blog with how I talk. I blog how I organically think and write stuff out as it comes into my head.

Podcasting is my next step where I can tell my story verbally the same way I think it, as I think it. I'm getting there after a few episodes so far. And sometimes I feel like my Podcasting is surpassing my blogging due to there being zero delay between thought and speech opposed to the time it takes me to type what I'm thinking. I can get side tracked easier while typing because the time it takes. But, whether the topic be venting, excitement, disappointment, fear, talking about my day, making people laugh, whatever; podcasting as a way to story tell with on the spot thought process fascinates me and is what I wish to achieve. I have so much to say and having to limit that verbally due to a lack of ability to get the words out right is very frustrating. I'm a poor story teller in person. I lose the details as I'm trying to say them which ends up ruining the narrative and makes me sound foolish and weak. When I'm allowed to write my thoughts out, I become much more clear and concise.

## Helping Me To Be A Better Communicator

I've always felt that strongly that I am a great thinker. I tend to dwell on topics of interest or concern; whether it be in a positive or negative light. As mentioned above, I gravitate towards deep thought and trying to find the "why's" or "how's" in life as it pertained to my life. How can I get better sleep or more energy during my days? How can I optimize my strength or recovery quicker from workouts? Why did I say that offensive thing to so and so? I ask myself so many questions that all I do is try and think of the answers. Due to all of this inner/deep thinking, I frequently stumble upon what I like think as insightful and intelligent thoughts. I find myself coming to conclusions on things that surprise me. Thinking seems to be a strong suit of mine. But, if you asked me to tell you what my thoughts are, I almost freeze in a way. The second I go from just thinking about something, to have to both think about it and say it the way it's in my

head, I lose track of my thought process and I can't get it out. That's a big problem to me. I want people to know my deep thoughts but have no way to convey the message to them the way I would hope. This is probably why I gravitate towards comedians. They can both have intelligent thoughts and deliver them efficiently. So when I listen to Rogan, Stern, and Burr regurgitate their inner dialogue in such a clean and thoughtful way, I get very envious and want to achieve that ability. Aside from professional comedians, any person I know in my life who has a "way with words" or can even say things that make you think strongly about any given topic, fascinates me. If I could just be able to speak the exact way I think, I could really appreciate my mind a lot more. And who knows, maybe others could too. So that being said, a huge motivation of doing my own podcast in essence, is a way for me to practice delivering my own inner dialogue without having to stress about who's hearing it and responding in real time. Episode one of my podcast Life Of Chenz (LOC) was a train wreck for sure. I was struggling to maintain thought. I strained to keep the dialogue moving with awkward pauses. And mostly, finding my voice was a problem. I have so many influences that it seems like I was trying to be them all; which caused big problems in a later episode. I really don't know my voice like other people do. I don't necessarily mean the sound of my voice, but also my delivery. I surprised myself the way I spoke and felt it was so unnatural sounding in playback. This realization sealed the deal for me in my desire to practice communicating better. I knew this was an appropriate project to examine both as a way to explore a new medium and information technology, and as a way to improve a personal trait that I can take with me through my whole life. I've listened to all my episodes and notice vast, MASSIVE improvements from episode 1 to episode 4. I've received feedback from listeners that it's night and day. And in my own personal life I see myself being able to have deeper conversations and ask more thoughtful questions of people; which gets them to think deeply too. This is a great feeling when I'm into a

conversation with someone who's talking about something upsetting for them and I'm able to go past the expected "oh i'm so sorry I hope that works out for you's". I can ask more personal questions about motives or what-if's, or possibly give suggestions on why a certain thing might be happening or what they can do about it. Overall I can be more engaged in a conversation and build a deeper connection. I'm becoming more curious about things that get me to want to talk and ask questions when I was much more closed off before. One part of my communicate that I really wanted to work on was my ability to vent. I hold way too much in that bothers me and really have a tough time talking about it with people. Could I actually experience less stress and anxiety if I were able to talk about my problems instead of holding them in?

## A Great Way To Vent

As stated above, I have a wealth of thoughts spinning around in my head. While there are frequent insightful ones, there's just as many if not more, frustrated and/or upsetting ones. It seems the older that I get and the more responsibilities I tack on to my agenda, the more irritable and anxious I get. These topics that seem to now bug me, are not things that got to me in my younger years. So, it seems I'm in for a long life of venting. But as discussed, I'm not great at voicing my thoughts. So while I'm working on "practicing my speech delivery with podcasting, I'm also giving myself a way to vent. The great thing about venting on a podcast, is you don't have to worry about irritating or burning out a person you'd be talking to in real life. From my experience, people tend to tune out after you've complained about something a bit too long. I know I do! But if you're a highly anxious person and have no outlet to "take the garbage out," you become very pent up and your health starts to suffer; whether that be mental or physical. Doing menial tasks like walking a dog that likes to tug becomes a battle when it

doesn't have to be. Or juggling two jobs, a house, a dog, grad school, and a lofty gym schedule tends to lead to a couple meltdowns; in my experience. Venting can be very therapeutic and should be utilized by anybody who's high strung. Not everyone can afford a professional to talk to or have a ton of free time to even see one if they did. For me, being able to scream obscenities, be funny, and say really outrageous things helps me to get the poison out. At first it wasn't working, being so focused on just trying to talk with nobody on the other end of my voice to respond. But, after I started getting comfortable talking to nobody, I realized I was able to really say what was on my mind without straining. My voice calmed down, my tension eased, and I could finally get out my negative thoughts with no embarrassment or judgement coming back on me. If I can keep improving at venting through Podcasting and communicating in person to people as a whole, who knows, I might just find myself less stressed and less anxious. So why Podcast to vent? To be happier so you don't take things out on people and make them miserable or upset. Misery shouldn't love company;but it does.

## DIY Component Interests

I am becoming more curious about things as I grow older. It started with dieting. I broke from the traditional "eat less, lose more" trends and looked at eating what the body responded to best. This meant removing all processed foods and mostly everything that was packaged and switching over to raw foods that needed prepping. Over the course of months/years, I realized I enjoyed making my own food and finding ways to make healthier versions of almost anything that could be purchased already packaged. I felt some sort of vague pride that I was taking the time and effort to do this manual process. I like the way it looks from the outside. This is just one example of a manual process that I've latched onto. There's been many more in my past

even including crocheting and making bracelets. I'm a DIY'er at heart. My most recent big DIY was learning how to sand down, re-stain, and poly 850sq ft of wall to wall flooring in a house I bought. I think it's just something that'll always be a part of me now that I realized my deep curiosity.

So, when it came time to think about Thesis subjects, I only knew 2 things: I would rather do a project than write a paper, and I want to do it on something that actually interested me so that I'd have a high probability of actually trying hard on it. So what are things that I enjoy that I a) don't know how to do and b) have the ability to learn at home; that both have to do with Information Design? PODCASTING! Heck, all I really needed was a microphone (which honestly is already built into my computer if I didn't want to spend money) and an editing program (which conveniently was also already inside my computer; GarageBand). So with the idea that I enjoy learning how to do stuff that could've already been done for me and that Podcasts are a really large interest of mine from the listening perspective, it seemed like a no brainer that I could dive in head first with the topic. I had no idea what to do other than record my voice and find a way for people to hear it. Sounds simple right? I now had the opportunity, and most importantly the necessity, to learn how to make one on my own; just like all of these other things I learned outside of school. The actual process of creating and implementing a podcast is incredibly easy; after you get your first couple reps out of the way that is. It's actually a long process to learn all of the steps. It takes a lot of research and patience to find the right sources to tell you what to do. And not only do, but do correctly. There were many sources that were of no help whatsoever and really wasted my time. That's all part of the research process though; compiling valuable resources and discounting worthless sources. So how did I actually create my media package?

## Creation/Implementation Steps

### The Website: aka The Housing Of My Media Package

The first step for me was to decide where to house all the components of my media package; the blog and the podcast source feed. The decision to do a website was a no brainer. Which led to the next question- What website creating service can allow me to contain both a blog and podcast. Some sources do not give the ability to contain a blog. I had two services in mind; [WordPress](#) and [SquareSpace](#). Now, I've had a lot of experience with WordPress. I've used this service to create multiple websites for past classes. This is where I learned that I had the ability to blog; which is why I'm using a blog as a way to chronicle my experiences with everything. It's easy to use with not much learning curve but can be very limiting based on the theme you choose. My other option I've heard peddled by the likes of Joe Rogan and Bill Burr on a day to day bases. To their defense, they're paid by SquareSpace to advertise with them on their podcasts but I feel that trusting of their opinions. Multiple comedians use this source to create their websites, including Rogan. It seems to be much more customizable; all the way down to manipulating any feature however, the learning curve is quite a bit higher. Web design is not my focus so I wanted to keep the design element simple; so I went with WordPress. I know the ins and outs of choosing a theme, manipulating the theme, creating pages, adding posts to pages, and import media. The big unknown at this point was how to incorporate a podcast so that it can be fed to the iTunes page that I later created but, we'll get to that part. I chose the [Dyad](#) theme by a group called Automatic. This allowed for blog posting, social media links, pages, and stylistically looked really nice. I created a few basic pages: Home, About Me, Blog,

Contact. My main concern was the content added the blog page as that's where the bulk of my research was documented. Once I had my site site laid out, I added a post about myself with a less in depth background about myself and answered the biggest question I proposed for my thesis; [Why did I choose to Podcast?](#). This is the backbone of my project in essence. After the website was looking about how I wanted it to, it was just trivial, less important cosmetic tweaks I've been making here and there; should blog post thumbnails appear as title + text preview or a photo also. Until I got to some more serious tweaks later on, I only had one thing left to do at this point to make the site podcast compatible; upgrade from the free account. At first I did not like this idea at all as I'm very cheap. But after some research, I realized I must upgrade to at least the premium plan. This plan runs \$8.25 a month which is billed yearly; I had to pay for a whole year at once. It has advanced design customization features, removes the wordpress.com ads, provides ability to monetize my site, and allows videopress support. This was enough for my purposes and with 13GB of storage space, I had enough tools at my disposal to accomplish a basic Podcast site. Should I chose to in the future, the Business plan is always an option which gives unlimited storage space, advanced design customization, unlimited premium themes, courses/tools, Google analytics integration, and allows you to remove any indication that you've created the site with WordPress. With the package, I also got to chose my own domain name. My site would come to be called Life Of Chenz or, [lifeofchenz.com](#). Now that I had a good look and a good plan, I figure it best be time to get the ball rolling on making the centerpiece of my project; the podcast. I had things to research like being obtaining better than the iMac's internal microphone to something that could achieve above basic level sound quality, What sorts of free software options did I have at my disposal, and how the heck do do I get my podcast to show up on Apple's podcast player?! There was

more for sure but those are some big hitters. We'll be taking a stroll down all these avenues ahead.

## What Hardware Did I Get?

While I know there are seemingly endless amounts of different things I can purchase to help me record, I also know that to start out, I don't need much more than a computer and a microphone. But in reality, I was only going off assumptions without ever having researched the topic. What made me want to upgrade to a standalone microphone opposed to using my iMac's internal microphone? Well, I've heard the sound potential of a computer's internal mic and knew I could/should do better. Again, I look up to and am inspired by Rogan and Stern who have fantastic, hiss free sound quality. I know I can't match that, but no reason not to try. So I figured I'd start by looking up microphone options and see where it took me. As a late 20's something, Google is becoming our go-to source of any information we're in search of. I had a few factors I was considering before I made a decision: cost and reviews/ratings. I didn't want to spend all that much money on my first one; just a suitable step up from the built-in mic. Most product Google searches result in [Amazon](#) being the first hit. Amazon is a fantastic online marketplace both for finding almost any product you want with quality reviews and very competitive prices. I was eager to get the microphone fast so I mostly kept my Amazon search results limited to Amazon Prime eligible products. This service delivers packages with free shipping within 2 business days. So I went back to Google to find some good websites ranking/reviewing microphones knowing I'd get back to Amazon for the purchase. I wanted to stay around \$50.00 or under going in so the best value close to that worked for me. Between various ranking websites, I found three microphones that seemed to keep showing up on all the lists. First there was the [Blue Microphone Snowball iCE Condenser Microphone](#). She came

very well rated with aprox. 1660 user rating it an average of 4.5/5 stars and coming in at \$49.00. On top of positive ratings and a good price point, there was a built in windscreen to help reduce “popping” from air hitting the mic from your voice, came in multiple color options, and the company in general has many high rated microphones. Then there was the [Samson Go Mic Portable USB Condenser Microphone](#). This is another well rated mic that comes in at \$39.99 and also achieving 4.5/5 stars on Amazon from 1,174 users. The nice feature about this one was how compact it was. It folds up and can go into your pocket. Due to the size of the mic, there was no built in windscreen and the sound quality would not be quite as good as the Blue. It also wasn't as pretty. One positive feature was the addition of a headphone jack so that you can plug in and listen to immediate feedback. I threw one more mic into my searching that seemed like an attractive option called the [Samson Meteor Mic USB Studio Microphone](#). This was by far the coolest looking microphone I've ever seen; looking like some sort of alien probe or weapon. It came in at \$69.94 and with higher sound quality ratings. It also received 4.5/5 stars with just 686 users. I did want to get that one but decided to save the \$20 and be more conservative. Based on my basic needs at the time, I went with The Blue Snowball knowing it was recommended, in my price range, and that I'd have it in 2 days. Just for good measure I picked up the recommended Pop Filter to go with the microphone. It was the [Dragonpad](#) and ran me an additional \$9.00. The purpose of the pop filter is to be a wind barrier between your mouth and the mic as well as to prevent moisture from getting to the mic. This all helps reducing weird popping noises.

The mic was a very easy set up which was nice. Literally just 1 wire that plugged from the back of the computer to the back of the mic which sat on top of a short tripod allowing swivel and tilting. The filter screw clamped onto the mic stand and we were in business. The only other set up was to convert the computer's sound recording option from the internal mic to the Blue

Snowball mic. The sound is exponentially better than that of the internal microphone but it was far from perfect. What would you expect for \$50.00. Top level microphones would cost hundreds, if not thousands of dollars. So what that meant is that I'd have to rely on recording software to help correct sound blemishes and issues as good as I could get. This leads to my next step; the recording software I used and how I used it.

## What Software Did I Use?

This was one of the unknowns I had going in. I had zero experience recording into a microphone, let alone editing something. To start, I knew I'd have to search the Googles a bit and also that I wasn't going to spend money on this part. But I also went partially on recommendations from my cousin who is an audio engineering student at NYU; aka, he's very smart and his area of study is audio production. I had a strong feeling there were multiple free, open source programs available. And to my luck, there were! Actually, one of them was already on my computer. [GarageBand](#) is designed to record and edit music tracks mostly but in no way is limited in allowing you to easily record and edit spoken word. In this case, you can consider a podcast a spoken word song. It has a very clean and neat interface making it less frightening to learn. You can add tons of different effects to your voice and customize equalizer levels and other noise clarity settings. I saw GarageBand on a few different sites as being very well recommended, user friendly, clean, and perfectly adequate for a beginner level recording/audio program. While yes, there were many more highly recommended softwares, they were for more experienced, weathered technicians. To top off the decision, it came most recommended by my cousin; yah, the NYU audio production student. I was advised that for my

purposes, this is by far the best option as it has every basic feature I need without having to learn the software over the course of a career.

The other option for a beginner I was finding was a program called [Audacity](#). In terms of editing purposes, this actually seemed to be the most recommended. It had a feature in it that allowed you to select particular sound artifacts; sounds you didn't want to be heard like popping; and the software would use an algorithm to search the entire recording and remove that particular sound from every other part. This feature seems invaluable for audio files that are far from clean and crisp. There were definitely features about Audacity that were far from desirable that ended up making my decision to not pursue it. It has a very stale, old, Windows 95' look to it. It didn't look current or professional and there were so many buttons and unclear features that it was almost overwhelming to take in. I definitely gave Audacity a shot. I recorded my first episode with it and even attempted editing with it. I just found the learning curve very high and not always clear how I should use certain features. Additionally, the feature to sample selected artifacts took a long time to both analyze the rest of the track, and remove those features. I was getting increasingly more impatient and I was struggling. That feature also didn't work perfect so I didn't find it to be worth sticking with a program that was harder to use, and was very old dated feeling.

In the end, I stuck with GarageBand and had a lot of fun in the process. There are seemingly endless features to it; all of which tucked away neatly into folders. The minimalist, "Apple" look to the software mixed with the ease of use and low learning curve made it a perfect option for me. This isn't to say that I went without major trouble shooting or having to cry for help during certain times. There were many things I had to look up and learn before I got my technique down and shortened my production times. Editing was definitely a learning process mixed with a lot of experimenting.

## How Did I Edit For Sound Quality?

So I now had a great, easy to use software; GarageBand but not much of any idea on how to actually do much with it beyond dragging sound clips around on the screen. I not only wanted to reduce sound artifacts; the popping noises I referenced before; and other unwanted features, but also wanted the ability to add gaps to fill in with commercials, add background music, and even adjust the volume level of various clips. Burr's podcast isn't edited all that much at all which gives it a very raw and unfinished feel however, his content and do give a care attitude is so strong that it doesn't even matter. Rogan and Stern however, have superior sound quality with no echoing or artifacts. They sound as if they're sitting right next to you talking which is great. I don't have impressive content nor am I famous so working on editing my podcast is a huge focus. The raw file echoed and there were noises in the background like my fridge humming or my dog gnawing on a bone and it was distracting as a listener. I didn't really know where I should be looking up how to edit a podcast or even where to start. I hopped on Google in hopes there were answers. I searched a few items like "reduce noise artifacts in garage band" or "noise cleaning garageband." I kept getting tutorials based on the prior version of the software which had different features and buttons so I was scratching my head for a while. There apparently used to be a specific podcast feature right in GarageBand but for reasons that were not listed anywhere, it was removed completely. I ended up stumbling onto an Apple Support page called "how do I remove background noise in GarageBand?" That article can be located <https://discussions.apple.com/thread/6247599?tstart=0>. There was a slider in one of the sound windows called Noise Gate and as you moved the slider, it removed certain frequencies of sound. By the point that you got to a spot where the hum in my would go, it would start to make the audio choppy and skippy. So while the artifact was gone, the audio would skip much

like that of a scratched CD. So I knew this wasn't going to be suitable for my needs. I consulted with my cousin (the NYU student), to see what his thoughts were on the matter based off of his editing experiences in his classes. He gave me the first important piece of information: The Graphic Equalizer.

It's a "unit" in GarageBand to control certain frequencies and decibels much like a real sound board. Instead of blankly moving a Noise Gate slider, I now had about 20 sliders to customize it so much finer. He even gave me a template to follow that was best for spoken word; aka no instruments. Dropped all frequencies below 125hz to -20db, kept most between 160hz and 8,000hz right around 0db, gradually lowered 10,000hz-20,000hz to -20db again. Basically the humming and echoing were at very low frequency levels and the popping was at very high frequencies so dropping them down to -20db removed them almost completely. I did mess with the sliders on my own a bit to see what kind of changes would happen. What I was left with was my recording with most of my sound artifacts gone and most of the humming however, my voice was more muted. It was a little off putting, almost like I was talking through a tin can. I found another equalizer where you could see the actual sound waves and adjust the waves to your liking. So, in addition to using the AU Graphic EQ, I was using the master control EQ and adjusting the sound waves. I didn't have an aid to tell me how. This was purely trial and error/ full on experimenting with what I found to be the easiest to listen to. This was some on the job training for sure. The nice thing was I could play my episode back and adjust the controls in real time so the changes were heard as I was moving things around. There was no delay in feedback so I could make immediate decisions. I would go a bit too high in frequency and it would make it sound like a mouse talking and others sounded like Darth Vader. It would start to sound tin canny and then it would sound like an echo chamber. After a lot of adjusting, I got it to

where a vast majority of hum was gone and the popping non-existent. For the first 2-3 episodes it was much experimenting until I came to a great realization. Instead of creating a whole new audio file for every episode; which required moving sliders around for a while on each one, I could just keep the levels where they were, delete the sound wave, and start recording again with the levels where I left them. I then would just hit "save as" and save it as an additional file. That way I was able to preserve the last one, and save the current as a new one. This could be seen as risky, but I wanted to have some consistency and promptness in my editing to be more efficient and save time.

In my first episode, I threw in a commercial just to show what it would sound like. This is semi irrelevant to me at this point as nobody is sponsoring me or buying advertising time on my show but figured it would be good to feature at least once. In my recording, I made sure it set up a commercial coming so it didn't just appear as though a new piece of audio recorded over me already talking and made sure to leave a 1-2 second gap of time between my speaking and the commercial track. You have the ability to click into any part of the audio feed. After selecting where I want the commercial to start, I went up to the top level menu and hit the "edit" tab. In the list of options there is a "split regions at play head" feature. Where I clicked was the playhead. Once you split the track, you can move the 2 pieces independently. What I did next is add a 2<sup>nd</sup> line of audio and just quickly recorded a silly commercial. It was trivial and meaningless about some non-existent burger joint. Then I clicked and dragged that commercial into the gap where I had split the episode track apart. And voila, my podcast seamlessly flowed from me speaking, to a commercial set up, to a commercial, and then back to me again. It was a fairly easy process and gave me experience adjusting specific regions of an audio track. The

final stage of my edit required finding music and implementing it into my audio file. This came with a few headaches that's for sure.

## Background Music?

Musical additions to the episode accomplished two things for me: 1) they just gave a nice feel to have in the background. An intro track and body track set up a general theme to the episode. And 2), the addition of a piece of music helped mask most if not all remaining audio artifacts. I knew I wanted/needed music in my episodes to fill content gaps. I have 5 specific things I wanted to accomplish while researching this part:

1. Theme/General Sound
2. Levels
3. Licensing
4. Length
5. Source of Track

Again, I had to hit google. There is no textbook or cyan library article search you can do on how to create and edit a podcast. Believe it or not, I ended up getting everything I needed to add music from an online version of those books for dummies. You know, Learn How To \_\_\_\_\_ For Dummies; with the Yellow covers. My biggest concern was how to add music LEGALLY. I knew going in that there were licensing issues with adding media to podcasts and radio stations that typically require you to pay for rights. I wasn't ready to start paying for music licensing but still had a deep desire to feature music. I also knew that there was such a thing as "public domain." This is media that is free to use for anyone in any way they wish. Where do I get it though? So with my "for dummies" manual [here](#), I basically found what I was in need of. The term the article used was "podsafe" or, safe to use in a podcast. The source suggest by Dummies was a domain called [Creative Commons](#). The whole goal of this organization was for

people, such as myself, to find public domain media. I say media and now music because you can search for any style media whether it be music, pictures, video, etc. The artists of whatever you find have given permission for the file to be used freely. When you enter the site, you simply type in the name of what you want, click an option on how you want to use that file, and click the source where you want it to come from. I've had some experience with SoundCloud so I've stuck with that for all my musical finds. Once in SoundCloud, the tag "to use commercially" was already pre selected; making all search results public domain. The one caveat to using Creative Commons and any of their sources was to make sure to give credit to the artist from whatever you've used. I did so at the end of every post by linking their user name directly to the track page it came from and advising how I used it; intro song or body song. Once I found a song I wanted to use, I'd make sure it had the download option which automatically sends it to my desktop or downloads folder. Now, it downloads as an iTunes ready file but does not show up in iTunes until you open the file. Then it becomes viewable and ready to use. In GarageBand, there is a dashboard off to the right of the window called "Media." In this field there is a list of file sources pulled from your computer. Clicking on the iTunes drop down, you can select "music," and below in a separate section appears all of the music in your music library. This is where you find the song you were hoping to use and simply drag it from that section, into your main audio screen and it appears as a new track. If you click in the middle of that track, a yellow bar will appear and this indicates your sound level. If you click the line anywhere, a dot will appear in the line which lets you adjust the sound level; allowing you to create fade-ins, fade-outs, and sound drops. I typically would find a 2-3 minute song that didn't necessarily have any lyrics, but a catchy beginning and use it for my intro. I'd fade it into a somewhat high level, and then around the 25 second mark start fading it down to a level low enough to not interfere with my vocals. Then my actual recording would chime in while the song

plays out. I would find another song with no lyrics to be around 1 hour in length to carry out the rest of my episodes. Most of the ones I've recorded ended up being right about 50+ minutes in length. I would keep the levels consistent throughout until about 10 seconds near the end of my recording. At this point I would start fading the music up to the level of my vocals until my recording stopped and the music was now the main focus. I would let the music ride out for another 30 seconds or so and then fade out to the end of the full recording. This became my go-to process for every episode after that. Once I was happy with the product, it was time to officially get it from GarageBand to an iTunes podcast page for Life Of Chenz. But there was so much more involved in that than I had anticipated which leads me to by far, the most grueling part of my process.

## Getting From GarageBand to WordPress

At this point, I had no idea what direction to go so I decided to utilize the WordPress support team that came with my premium package. I flat out asked them, how do I feature a podcast on my website? They responded very quickly providing me the support page that outlines not only how to get the podcast to my website, but also to a podcast page on iTunes.

[Support>>Audio>>Podcasting](#) gave me three topics to follow: [Create your podcast](#), [Configure your site](#), and [Submit to iTunes](#). This seemed easy enough right? First, in my WordPress dashboard, I had to create a category to tag my posts to called "Podcasts." Then I would create a new post and tag it as Podcasts." We'll get to why this tag is required soon. Then, I had to embed my podcast episode in my post. Here's the first hitch that the support page didn't mention; just because you've saved your podcast in GarageBand, doesn't mean it's in a file format or source folder that can be uploaded to WordPress. Everytime I tried to upload the file, the site wouldn't allow me to because it was not in the appropriate file format. A simple search

in Google revealed how easy it was. First you click the “share” drop down at the top of GarageBand, then “send song to iTunes.” Once I hit share, the song compressed and was officially part of iTunes. Now that it was there, it was also in the correct file format for WordPress; mp4. After a brief loading time, the track was now in my blog post. I wrote up a quick summary of it, tagged the post as “podcasts,” and featured my musical artists. An additional step that helps later is to include a mini summary of the episode in WordPress’ excerpt field. Then, just publish the post. Ok, so now, if you went to my website and then to the blog post where my podcast was featured, the episode was 100% listenable; but only from my website. I now had to configure my website. This required me to go into my Admin Dashboard in WordPress and manipulate settings. Again, this was not straightforward as the guide made it seem. There were many dashboards in WordPress which had me going in circles for a while. There was a special section for Admin privileges that wasn’t exactly “out in the open.” Going to the dashboard>Settings>Media was what I was supposed to do but finding it was no easy task. Settings>Media wasn’t showing up anywhere. After a long time of searching and trial/error, I inevitably found the Admin dashboard which differs from my web dashboard. Now that I found it, I had to give my podcast a title; Life Of Chenz, Podcast Subtitle; Podcast Talent Name, Podcast Summary, Podcast Copyright, Check Off Explicit; for foul language, a Podcast Image; this gave me a ton of issues, Podcast Keywords, and Podcast Categories. After that it was a quick save. The following steps were the most troublesome.

### From WordPress to iTunes

While the instructions claim the “submit to iTunes” step only needs to be done once, they make you work hard to get it that one time. Firstly, you had to find your RSS feed URL. This is what you link to the podcast page you create for Apple that needs to be approved before your podcast will be public. This one took me a while to figure out. I’ve never heard of RSS feeds

before and the procedure that WordPress provides doesn't exactly show me how to get my specific RSS feed for my podcast. They give examples by saying to add "/feed/" to the end of a posts url to get the feed for that post. But I didn't want the RSS for a specific post of mine, I need it for the "podcast" category that I was tagging my posts as. Again, the guide never advised how to get a blog's feed for the RSS url. After much experimentation, I determined that the correct action would be [lifeofchenz.com/category/podcasts/feed/](http://lifeofchenz.com/category/podcasts/feed/). Unfortunately, there was a lot of guessing/experimenting to get to a lot of points in this part of the process which yes, helped me learn the manual way, but wasn't very efficient and added doubt during a lot of steps. Next I had to "test the feed" through Apple. This was the way that Apple could see if your feed connected directly to the episodes which is required in order to be approved for a public iTunes page. So there was a link in the guide, [here](#), on how to test a feed which sends you to an apple podcast support page. It was a short set of instructions which were easier to follow. First I had to open iTunes on my computer. Once in there I hit the "file" drop down to find "subscribe to podcast." This is where I had to input my RSS feed; [lifeofchenz.com/category/podcasts/feed/](http://lifeofchenz.com/category/podcasts/feed/). I then was able to see my podcast feed in iTunes (only me at this point can see this). It appears as 1 episode in a list of where all my episodes would be featured. I could also play it which confirmed my feed was accurate and working. The other way I confirmed it worked was by using the guide's suggested feed tester source [here](#). Again, simply paste in the RSS feed and hit check. I was provided with: "Congratulations!  This is a valid RSS feed."

## Recommendations

This feed is valid.” If there were problems, it would tell me and give suggestions how to correct it. So now my feed works and Apple can use it to draw from. Next step was to “[submit a podcast](#).”

## Apple Approval

Again, we have another set of instructions to follow. The first step was to use Podcasts Connect to submit the podcast for approval. Here’s the next big hang up that took me a few days to figure out. There was no link to Podcasts Connect anywhere in this guide. I couldn’t find it period. I thought I made missed a step somewhere and kept going back and forth trying to figure out where this mysterious spot was. I didn’t know if it was a setting in iTunes or WordPress or what. I searched in the tools section of both and found absolutely nothing on it. I eventually gave up and went to Google. A simple search of the exact phrase brought me to the first search result of [Podcasts Connect - Apple](#). This link brought me to a login screen; requesting my Apple ID and password. After logging in, it brought me to a page labeled iTunes Connect- My Podcasts. There was only one action to take and it was a ” + “ button. After hitting that, I had to put my RSS feed in again. After gaining access, it brought me to, more or less, a dashboard page for my Life Of Chenz Podcast. It was basically a user page or profile for the podcast. There is a status icon alerting you if you're podcast is active or not, last time it was refreshed, and a couple other features to keep up on settings. In order for Apple to approve my podcast, it had to review my credentials and I needed to be meeting all requirements. The only thing I seemed to of gotten hung up on was the size of my podcast image. They have very, VERY stringent expectations on this feature. Now, I do not own photoshop any longer after upgrading to an iMac from my MacBook. The laptop had photoshop however, the laptop is verging on it’s last leg; hence the upgrade. I had to scour the internet for a web based photo

editor that allowed me to manipulate image size/resolution details. After a LOT of tinkering and trial & error, it finally worked. My podcast approval request was submitted to Apple. I believe I heard back within a day or 2 that it was APPROVED! From that point on, you could see my page in iTunes and listen to anything I uploaded just like all of the favorites I have like Burr and Rogan. Luckily, this whole submission process, as stated before, was a one time thing. From here on out all I had to do was create a new blog post, tag it to my podcasts category, upload the audio file, and publish that blog post. When you refreshed the Life Of Chenz iTunes page, the new episode was there and ready to enjoy. The feeling of accomplishment was absolutely exhilarating. The live podcast can be found on iTunes [here](#).

## What Experiences Did I Encounter?

### Positive

At first, I wasn't quite sure that had really gained anything beneficial out of the process. I am a natural skeptic so I, course, saw this as a terrible piece of audio production initially. However, the more I practiced the craft of speaking and process of editing, the more I realize I was not only getting better, but getting better at a rapid pace. Music was getting easy to find and edit to sound cohesive with my recording. The levels of sound felt appropriate and theme of the song was appealing to listen to whether it was the intro, body, or ending to the recording. I noticed after every single episode, my ability to speak to nobody was improving almost overnight. Malcom Gladwell claims in his book Outliers, that someone needs 10,000 hours of mindful practice to become truly masterful at any skill. Whether that's been debunked or not is irrelevant; I can see improvements after 10 hours. Every recording is less stressful than the

last. I slowly am losing my anxiety of trying to come up with things to say. One of my biggest goals of this project was to become a better speaker. And not only a better speaker, but gain a better ability to wrangle my thoughts and being to deliver them verbally without losing the key concepts and goals I was thinking about. I gained a lot of experience in perseverance with the pursuit of knowledge. There were so many steps of this process that made me want to stop because I was running into brick walls in research and mental blocks in recording content. I gained a level of patience I didn't have before. I learned a new skill, hobby, and trade. I had no prior knowledge of GarageBand, Podcast Creation, and iTunes Connect. I furthered my writing abilities as I chronicled every experience I had, whether it good or bad. And I really learned a valuable skill of research documentation by way of doing that blog. By keep track of everything I did while blogging, I was able to enjoy it because I could put it in my own voice. I had no prior, valuable experience with qualitative research and data collection. I think most importantly, I was able to impress myself and get ok with my own voice. I tend to set high standards for myself that are almost unreachable. For once it feels like I was able to accomplish something that wasn't in the frivolous manner. I can now take all these skills with me instead of leaving them in the educational dust. This isn't something I can just forget now. Having this ability opens up doors to new hobbies, no potential career paths, and an ability to voice my thoughts and let go of negative ones.

## Negative

I'll start off by saying that a vast majority of negative experiences ended up becoming positive ones after utilizing some patience and persistence. I think the biggest negative I encountered was the inconsistency in various tutorials or guides provided by WordPress and/or Apple. I found myself having to go third part "how-to" sites very frequently to try and decipher what was

being told to me in these supposed more legitimate guides. I was under the distinct impression that in order to flow through one of their guides seamlessly, you already needed a prerequisite base of knowledge in the subject area. A great example was with a step listed above; having to use Podcasts Connect and/or iTunes Connect in order to submit your podcast for approval. It simply said to use the service. The problem was they did not give a link to the service, to a guide how to use it, where to find it, or any other pertinent details that would of been helpful. It made me feel foolish as if I should of already known what they were talking about. If you're providing a guide on how to use one of your services, and you leave out important details, it creates a brick wall in the process. This caused a lot of frustration and put a lot of doubt in my head. Luckily, I kept plugging away and found the answer, but it should of been like that. WordPress and Apple could of easily linked a "where to find" type section to the guid. It just took away from professionalism.

## What I Learned

The biggest thing I learned was I was capable of improvement. I took a media platform that I had absolutely zero creationary experience with, and literally taught myself how to do it. Maybe it's just our generation and the unbelievable oversaturation of data that exists on the internet. But, it felt very fulfilling to dial in my patience and sit with this project through the end. There's definitely an appreciation you get when you figure out how to do stuff on your own. Aside from that, I learned I have a voice. And not only do I have a voice, I don't have to use others' voices. I ran into a problem in episode 2 or 3 where I was complaining quite heavily about some things that were happening at work. In the process, I was being particularly harsh towards the type of employees my employer hires. I was surely trying to be controversial, funny, and outrageous but I was trying much too hard. The entire recording I had to keep pausing and collecting my

thoughts; struggling to come up with something wacky and clever to say about them. After finishing the episode and hearing the playback, I actually felt remorse. And more than remorse, I felt shame. I was realized I was being not only humorous, but malicious and vicious towards them. If anyone were to hear that, they would be immediately offended and it took away from my character. Burr, Sturn, and Rogan all have a great ability to be all of those features I was trying to be without being malicious or hurtful. But what I didn't realize at the time was they've been honing that craft for decades while I've been honing it for a few hours. I ended up pulling the episode off iTunes, and rerecording it. I slowed down, had more collected thoughts (and maybe because I already had an hour of recording practice under my belt with the subject matter), and have a much smoother, less crude episode. I still kept to my subject matters but put it more in my voice as if I were talking to a friend. This definitely taught me an invaluable lesson that I am in no position to race to any podcasting finish line. If I stick to my pace as a beginner in the medium, I can go a lot further with more energy. I have all the time in the world to find my real voice, but until then, I won't use others'.

## Conclusion

My Thesis was a media package all centered around a podcast; Life Of Chenz. I had to create a website to start. The website allowed other media components to be present including a blog. I used the blog as a way to digitally journal every step of the way through the process of researching, creating, and implementing a fully fleshed out, public podcast. I researched topics like recording hardware, recording software, how to edit, how to add music legally, how to inject a podcast into my blog, how to take my podcast through Apple's approval process to be seen publicly on iTunes, and more. I had no prerequisite knowledge of any of these topics going in. Now, I feel like I have a backbone in the subject matter and experiment to make it even better

going forward. Why did I chose a podcast? I have a great affinity of listening to my favorite casters like Bill Burr, Joe Rogan, and Howard Stern; whether you consider Stern a podcaster is irrelevant because it's long format spoken word. I also wanted to improve my ability to speak out my thoughts the way I think them using an increasingly popular information design topic. I feel I've successfully accomplished both tasks and more. I am gaining the ability to speak better more and more everyday and get comfortable with my own voice. This has been a truly awesome experience I can't wait to see where it goes.

# Literature Review

## Intro

Storytelling, in any essence, has been around since the dawn of man and continues to evolve. Stories have been told since the days of cave wall paintings to pass on information. Then humans took on speech and a verbal language. Information was passed via mouth and memory. Writing and an alphabet was then born; allowing written passages that could be passed on and adapted over time. Then the invention of early microphones came into creation and led to recordings such as radio. Technology grew making ways for alternative versions of recording and spreading information like computers. We then came to know Podcasting as an emerging media format for the voice. No longer did you have to be restricted to set content on radio stations. Podcasting allowed users to have immediate access to information in their pocket, on their smartphone, tablet, or computer; available 24/7 as long as there was an internet connection. This format of information design provides seemingly endless genres of recorded; and sometimes live; audio for users to pick and choose what they listen to, when they want to. Podcasting rebrands the way we tell/hear stories and, learn new things. Aside from entertainment and knowledge, podcasting has the ability to influence thought when provided by high profile broadcasters, such as Mark Maron.

## Podcasts

Typically available as a series of episodes, a Podcast is a digital audio, and/or video file available on the internet for downloading.(Nesi, 36) Podcasts can be used for numerous reasons but big hitters are for learning, teaching, and storytelling. You could also make an argument that they are also used for finding introspection and learning about yourself. The medium is becoming a way for students to retain knowledge and take notes easier as lectures are being recorded and uploaded. Celebrities are using them to tell their own stories and learn about things that fascinate or, intrigue them. Because of its inexpensive, and restriction free nature, it becomes a valuable means of information design to spread information. Additionally, Kyle Wrather outlines that podcast content is being made more available to younger, tech-savvy listeners, and potentially expanding their influence to reach around the world.(Wrather, 2016) What this means in terms of accessibility is that broadcasting is being made more available to no professional types without the need of high priced equipment or prerequisite experience. And with the access to information available on the internet, it's also somewhat easy to learn how to record and edit. There were two events that took place in 2014 that had an influential impact on the medium's skyrocket in popularity: Apple launched its native podcast app which made it exponentially easier to download episodes directly to your smartphone and, the birth of the podcast Serial; a spin-off of American storytelling show *This American Life*.(McHugh, 65) It cannot be denied that without talk based radio shows; whether public or satellite; podcasting wouldn't of gotten a footing.

## Radio Parallels To Podcasts

At this point, it's becoming more well known that podcasting is an extension, if not adaptation of the more well known and trusted radio format. In an article by Richard Berry, it is discussed that there are delineations between radio and podcasting. One of which is that podcasting is not an alternative to broadcasting(radio), but a realisation of broadcasting that should exist alongside radio.(Berry, 2016) It is suggested that a radio broadcast could be a podcast and a podcast could be a broadcast. A difference noted between the two is that while radio hosts could easily conduct their own podcasts, non industry individuals can create podcast that are absolutely nothing like radio.(Berry, 2016) The big distinguishable feature about a podcast is the delivery, freedom, and access to it at any time. With radio, a listener is subjected to whatever is being broadcasted at any given time; removing freedom of selecting particular content. Podcasting then, sometimes becomes an outlet for aspiring radio personalities to do their own radio in a more free, less formatted setting.(Berry 2016). There is also a "do it yourself" or, DIY aspect that lends to the attraction of the medium. An individual may find him/herself more apt to take up podcasting because they can create it themselves, in their free time; even if they have a full time job. Elena Solomon coins a term called "Pro-Am;" short for professional amateur. It's the concept that amateur crafters; or in this case podcasters; can work on skills and trades in their free time and end up producing a just as good, if not better, quality product than a professional, with cheaper tools.(Solomon, 2013) Many podcasters do so in their spare time, outside of their normal, 9-5, day jobs.

As the term radio expands, there are now various forms such as talk based radio and chat based radio. Talk radio is a format that allows callers to contact the radio show to discuss

topics while chat based is usually a panel of hosts speaking to one another about topics; like *The Talk*. (Ames, 2016). The likes of self proclaimed “King Of All Media,” Howard Stern, could be lumped into both categories as guests freely call into his program while him and his co-host(s) inject their own banter. Stern’s format allows far greater freedom than that of shows on public radio as he broadcasts on SiriusXM Radio; a paid subscription, commercial limited service. This format allows Stern the freedoms of a podcast and the distribution of public access radio. You could almost conclude that Stern’s monster ratings mixed with 100% content freedom, opened up doors for podcasting to become more palatable to both record and listen to. Stern started on public radio, being credited for blowing up on WNBC in 1982. His crude content nature was highly criticized; eventually getting him fired from the station after broadcasting a skit called “Bestiality Dial-A-Date.” (Soley, 2008). While his unemployment was short lived, it was experiences like this that eventually led to his shift to satellite based radio, which gave him the room to express himself without fear of fines from the FCC or station backlash. Aside from the controversial topics he covers, he uses his radio show as a platform to narrate his personal story; often going into very deep detail of his personal life away from the show. He tends to play self therapist and try and figure out details of other people’s stories based off of his own experiences. With public radio, this simply wouldn’t be possible, but because he gets to decide his content, there’s nobody to tell him what he can or can not talk about. This could be a reason why podcasting is so attractive for many. What can be learned from restriction free broadcasting? How can this format be used to educate?

## Educational Applications

As mentioned before, podcasts can be used for absorbing knowledge. According to an article by Jonah Weiner, podcasts are a means for surprising, revealing, and above all, enabling encounters with people, things, and ideas we didn't know.(Weiner, 2014). He relates them to a phrase of "feel-good-web." Knowledge is much easier to absorb when you are enjoying the process of learning. Weiner goes on to iterate that podcasts are engineered to be easy to get through so you stay tuned in. And they differ from reading based learning in the sense that you could find yourself reading and re-reading a single sentence barely be able to focus on it while in podcasting, you can simply just "tune back in," or rewind if you missed something. (Weiner, 2014)

In the educational space, podcasting would be provided as lectures, tutorials, and other learning material; whether it be audio or visual.(de Villiers & Walsh, 130) This information can go from teacher to student (substitutional podcasting) as a learning aid or from student to teacher (creative podcasting) as a way to show what's been learned and further instill concepts.(Pegrum, Bartle, & Longecker, 144). Having students create their own podcasts, while not widely used as a method, is seen as turning the students into "knowledge creators" to help develop a range of student competencies.(Pegrum et al, 145). Because podcasts are so accessible, and increasingly widely used among students, they pose to be a solid learning aid/tool. In a 2013 study at an African medical university was conducted to investigate why the availability of lectured podcasts were popular with the students. After interviews were done and responses were coded, the results had shown that podcasts were seen the improve the quality of classroom learning and that they provided opportunities for understanding difficult concepts

for students.(de Villiers et al, 133) Not only does being able to rewind and/or pause an episode help with retention and better note taking, but it allows you to pay attention in the classroom setting instead of worrying about taking good notes. In this case, the podcasted lecture could act as notes for a student. In a sense, a recorded lecture is another way of storytelling. Whether it's fiction, nonfiction, or educational material, information is being provided verbally. One factor that the African university study did not get into was what types of deliveries appealed to the students. Another question that could of been asked to further evaluate the population of student's interests was what style podcasts do they respond to best? Do they like being lectured? Do they like more of an organic narrative? Or do they like a conversation among multiple people, like a talk based radio broadcast. It also was not discussed if the lecture podcasts were done in any specific format. There is a thought that podcasts can in fact help students learn due to there being a variety of learning styles. Since podcasts are so easy to make and distribute, they could be made to fit every learning style. Students could also learn valuable skills such as planning, reading, writing, listening, and speaking if they make their own podcast.(Buffington, 2010)

As an opposition to a podcast's use for educational purposes, there was a study documented in the *British Journal of Educational Technology* outlining that podcasts aren't always best suited for educational intentions. The study reveals that there is increasing evidence that not all technology practices are applicable to academic tasks and that many students still prefer attending lectures and reading text over tuning into podcasts.(Kazlauskas and Robinson, 2012) This could largely be to podcasting not being widely accepted yet as a means for learning and/or teaching. Its heightened popularity is only less than 3 years old at this point, so it's easy to assume that podcasting may find a more secure spot in the educational

word as time passes and awareness of its potential is more known. The next step is to get more students exposure to the medium, instilling confidence and experience for them.

Additionally, could the use of podcasts to learn instead of sitting through lectures actually have adverse effects? If a student had a photographic memory and could retain every word of a podcast, but wasn't involved in class discussions, would they lose the theories of the subject matter? Then one could take that argument to, what measures true understanding of knowledge? Would the need to be able to deliver it back soundly be enough, or would they need to show they understand, or both? OR, is listening enough to understand? This all comes back to being able to make podcasts for every single learning style. An idea to test understanding could be to request students submit questions to the podcaster suggesting they're formulating their own ideas. The students could also be required to record their own podcast as a response to the lectured recording. Maybe a teacher requests a podcast recording back from students to answer the teacher has for them; acting as an assignment, test, or verbal essay.

## Storytelling and Narratives

Because information seems to be more easily absorbed auditorily for many, it makes for great podcasts to tell a story. "Most podcasts are structured around the oral traditions of either storytelling or conversation, which underscores the most obvious formal fact of podcasts: they're driven by voices."(Weiner, 2016) While there are many podcasts created with intent to teach or inform, there are also ones used to simply talk. They may be talking about topics that interest them or about themselves in general. The creation of the podcast *Serial* seems to be what

jumpstarted storytelling genres. This podcast was a “serialized” true-crime investigation based off of TV show *This American Life*. The podcast reached 1 million downloads per episode inside a 4 week window.(McHugh,66). In the article, McHugh cites the newspaper, *The New Yorker*, claiming that podcasting humanises the news. This goes to show that being able to tell a story, by your own rules, allows a delivery and pacing that appeals to listeners. *Serial* took real life murder investigations and created a story out of them, giving them personalities. This wasn't just news being read off a teleprompter. The narrators are able to write the script and speak with emotion; giving the stories the humanising effects that McHugh references.

Podcasts can use the art of narratives to provide stories to listeners. Being able to telling a story in this medium removes the visual allowing; your mind to get sucked in. Because the voice is the intimate key to the audience's' heart, listening to personal stories of other people, listeners feel a greater connection to the story tellers.(Lindgren, 2016) Bill Burr of *The Monday Morning Podcast*, uses his podcast purely to talk about his life, grievances he has, and to promote his comedy acts and television appearances. He also responds to listener's questions; often asking him for relationship advice. To backup McHugh, people feel a connection to Burr because he speaks from his heart and shows raw emotion while telling his stories and making people laugh.

Another famous comedian using his microphone to dish his life saga is Marc Maron of the podcast WTF!. In the article *The Pursuit Of Authenticity on Marc Maron's WTF! Podcast*, Maron was quoted as saying “I think when my show is good, it has the ability to humanize people who are for the most part publicly one-dimensional; the only way you can take them in is through mainstream media.”(Meserko, 2015) This lends to *The New Yorker's* claims of podcasts and their humanising qualities. Aside from his interviews, Maron uses *WTF!* to narrate his life, especially during its creation, when he was unbookable near bankruptcy, as a way to fill

the holes his career was leaving.(Meserko,2015). Maron's interviews have a conversational quality that is also seen in other podcasts like *The Joe Rogan Experience* with Joe Rogan, and *The Fighter and The Kid* with Bryan Callen and Brendan Schaub. These podcasts use long format conversations with guests as an outlet for personal narration and storytelling that break up the exposure seen from question & answer interviews from the media. People can get a real sense of what somebody is like when you can hear them organically communicate instead of just replying to questions. Maron, and likely other podcasters with low self image, makes claims that his podcast has contributed to his newfound identic stability. He uses it not only as a way to narrate his life; highs and lows; but also to learn about himself.(Meserko, 2014) If you take a look at potential motives for people to create their own podcast where the agenda is merely their life, they must feel as though they have something worth talking about. They are curious not only about information retrieval, but about themselves in general. Take a character like Maron who was notably at the lowest of lows, and turned it all around after success of his responsive podcast. What exactly was it about the podcast and his personal narrative that turned brought him back up? It can be argued that by learning more about himself, acknowledging and addressing personal issues inside him, he was able to open up enough to allow a connection between listeners and his podcast. He, like others, use his podcast as a vehicle to tell his story, in search of answers about himself.

Something to note about using a podcast to tell your story or narrative is it's a way for the speaker to focus on interesting topics, ask questions, and reflect. This is so vital to the attraction of these styles of podcasts because they place human experiences as the centerpiece and use the stories to explore thoughts.(Lindgren, 2016). When the podcaster, especially of the celebrity nature, talks about issues personal to them, the listener gets to indulge in the vulnerability. They can then compare their own personal experience to that of the podcaster

which creates a bond in their head to that individual or their show. It almost gives the listener a glimpse into the lives of someone they've only seen on mainstream media outlets before like talk shows or in news pieces.

## Conclusion

Podcasting is the next step in the evolutionary process of how we communicate and learn as humans. Starting from paintings on cave walls to recording your voice as episodes, we are learning and telling stories in ways unthought of before. Podcasting is giving us a new format to teach, learn, tell stories, and seemingly endless possibilities further. By using the delivery of the human voice, we can build connections with listeners; humanizing people and creating a digital narrative of life through storytelling. The medium draws close ties to talk based radio and host paneled tv shows; allowing a crossover in audience exposure. Celebrities draw in more listeners by talking about their lives and giving the podcast medium a stronger footing as a viable form of information design. Additionally, podcasts act as a valuable outlet for learning about yourself and building a deep appreciation of your own thought process. Likewise, teachers can use podcasts to record and provide lectures to students. Students now have another way to absorb knowledge; being able to pull their smartphone out and listen to lectures with the ability to play, pause, and rewind.

Podcasts are simply changing the way we communicate;growing the appreciation in the the lost art of conversation and actually staying tuned in. Where will podcasting take us in the future? Could we see a different delivery method for podcasts? Or are podcasts simply another stepping stone in the evolution of the way we use human speech to teach, learn, and storytell. It will be an interesting ride over the course of humanity to see where this medium will take us.

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