



## 20 Ideas: Podcasting your lessons/revision materials

Podcasting is basically delivering an audio file via an RSS (web) feed. The producer of the content posts it to a website whereupon 'subscribers' to the podcast are notified that there is a new program available. In many podcast-enabled programs (including iTunes) these audio files can be set to be downloaded and synchronised with a mobile device automatically. This makes podcasts a perfect format for educators. But audio files are not the only types of files that can be delivered via an RSS feed, as I hope to explore below...



Everyone who has a blog has an RSS feed to share with the world. If you're interested in knowing how many subscribe to your blog or podcast, or want to have a bit more control over it, I recommend Feedburner, an excellent (free) service. To podcast an audio file, therefore, you simply need to tell your blog to attach a particular audio file to one of your posts. I do that on this Wordpress-powered blog through the rather wonderful PodPress plugin. I haven't space to go into how to do it on every

platform, but a quick Google search with the name of your blogging platform and the word 'podcasting' should turn up trumps. One other tip is to host your files for free at the Internet Archive rather than eat up your webspace (ccPublisher makes this easy...) :D

For assistance in getting from recording yourself through to configuring your blog to podcast, see my 5-part podcasting guide:

- \* Part 1 – the what and the why of podcasting
- \* Part 2 – recording your podcast
- \* Part 3 – putting your podcast together
- \* Part 4 – making your podcast available to others
- \* Part 5 – advanced podcasting

I've heard of lots of ways in which educators have used podcasts for learning gains and convenience. Universities use iTunesU to podcast lectures, teachers record important revision content for students to listen to on their MP3 players, and groups of students produce podcasts to help organize their thinking. If you're going to podcast on the move I recommend you getting either an MP3 player with a built-in microphone, or an iPod with something like the now-discontinued iTalk adapter.

Results 1 - 10 of about 54,100,000 for **podcasting**.

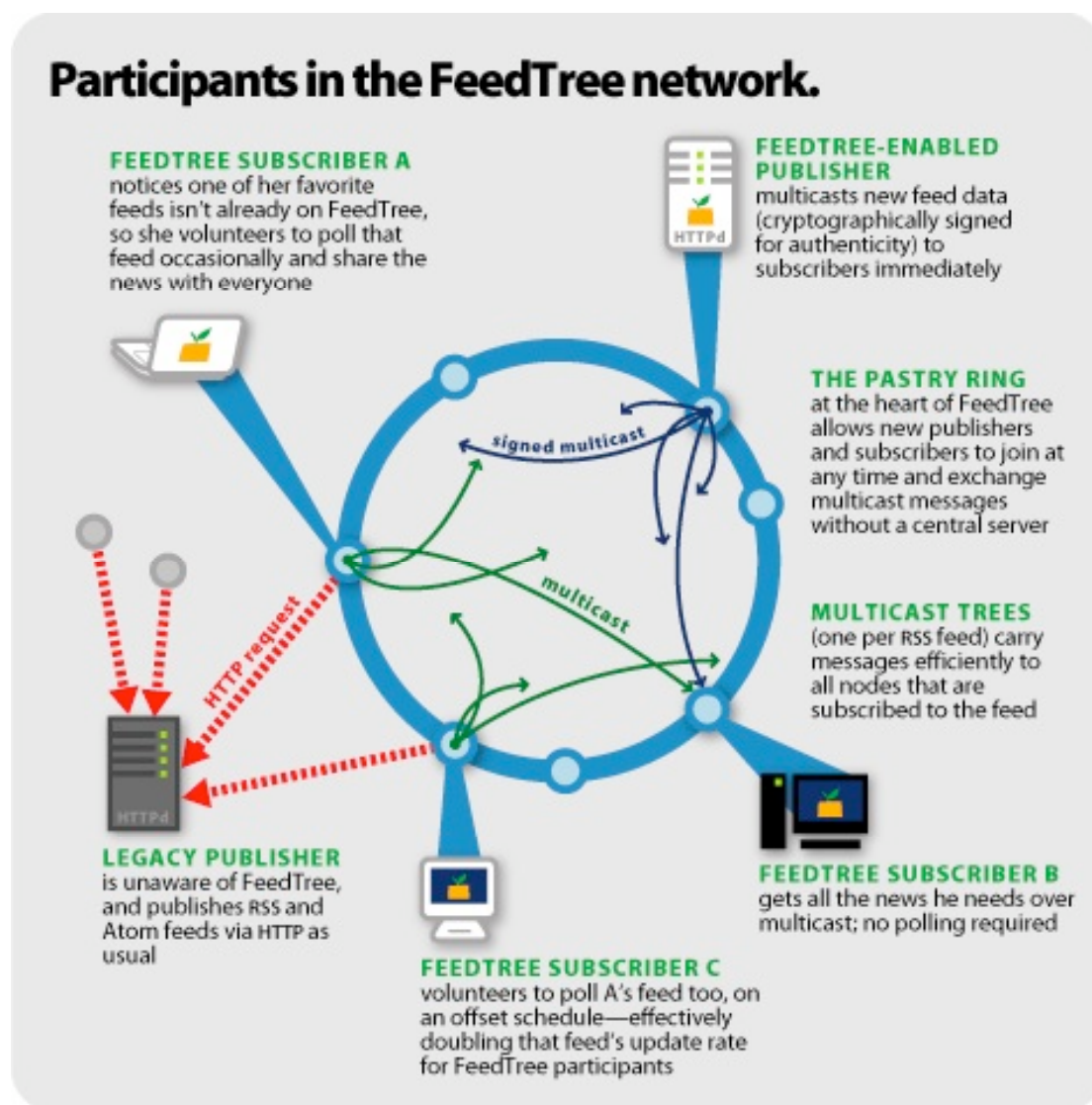
There's far too many articles on the Internet just about podcasting, however. Let's look at something more interesting. Let's imagine you want to regularly podcast revision materials to students. Can we do this through an RSS feed? We certainly can...

For some ideas on what types of things you can deliver via RSS feeds other than audio and video, have a look here. The PodPress plugin I mentioned above has support for MP3, MP4, M4A, MOV, FLV, AVI, MPEG, ASF, WMV and PDF files, but I want to be able to deliver more than this! I want to be able to deliver Powerpoint presentations, spreadsheets, documents and pretty much any file I might have on my Macbook to my audience. I've tried using the Enclosure Flex plugin for Wordpress in order to enclose files other than audio, video and PDF, but so far to no avail. I shall keep you all posted about my continued attempts and I would be

The purpose of this PDF is to demonstrate how such files can be distributed via RSS...

very interested to find out about anyone who's managed to deliver such files successfully!

As more and more files start to be delivered by RSS I can see it becoming a real strain on web servers. That's why some clever people have developed FeedTree, which is a bit like Bittorrent for RSS feeds. Check it out!



I'm a bit disappointed that I haven't been able to find a way to easily (and automatically) share all kinds of files via RSS. I'll be working on it in the weeks to come, however. Whilst I do, here's some other stuff to check out:

- Blogger doesn't allow the enclosures necessary for podcasting by default, but try this fairly simple workaround if you want to use Blogger for this purpose!

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- For those (like me) into social bookmarking with del.icio.us, the media files you bookmark will have enclosures for them automatically generated in the RSS feed for your posts. For the supported filetypes, look here.
- iTunes supports enclosures with PDF files – see here for an example.
- I haven't tried it, but FeedCraft is a paid-for service which promises to make delivering all types of files via an RSS feed a straightforward process. I believe FeedForAll does a similar thing...
- FeedDemon (again, unfortunately a paid-for product) is the only RSS feeder of which I'm aware that supports pretty much every type of enclosure. I'd like to find an open-source Mac-compatible equivalent if anyone is aware of such a program!
- For those (geeky) few who might want to explore this to the nth degree, you might want to read up on broadcatching, which is when you combine bittorrent distribution and RSS feeds. There's a list of programs and feeds relevant to this over at Wikipedia