Created Content Committee
Creating Podcast to Reach a Larger Audience
Submitted on June 3, 2014

The Created Content Committee has been researching, organizing, and advocating for the creation of digital content in Illinois for many years, previously as the Digital Collections Users Group (DCUG). In the 2013-2014 year, committee members brainstormed ways to disseminate information about digital content creation in a way that is appealing and easily accessible to users.

Since many people are accustomed to the convenience of being able to listen to a podcast while performing everyday activities, the group decided to explore this avenue of information dissemination. The balance of this paper describes the committee's process of planning and executing a project to create podcasts about digital content creation and related topics. This is the first time that CARLI itself or a member committee has leveraged podcasting as an informational medium. The paper also reflects on adjustments to the process for future podcasts.

Podcast Planning

The concept of creating audio or video podcasts was first considered during a Created Content Committee meeting via conference call in September 2013. With further discussion at the October meeting, the group decided on a "how to" or best practices focus for the podcasts in order to provide practical, useful information to potential listeners. In the ensuing months, the committee discussed possible podcast topics via email.

Several topics were proposed, including:

- using CONTENTdm and other digital collection software
- cross evaluations of digital collection software
- best practices for digital preservation
- interviews with repository software developers and other related people in the field
- curating digital collections
- understanding metadata

The group also discussed frequency and format options via email. There was general support for developing monthly podcasts, approximately twenty to forty minutes long each. The group decided to pursue an interview format rather than taking a tutorial approach. Music was considered but rejected as an unnecessary complication. Because CARLI already has a YouTube channel and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign controls an iTunes U account, the committee concentrated on these two options for hosting either video or audio podcasts. In January, the committee determined that audio was the preferred medium, based on technological and skill barriers to video production, as well as work time that would be required to produce the content. Thus, the group concentrated on exploring the iTunes U delivery platform. The committee noted that audio podcasts could be supplemented visually with links to screenshots or slides if the content for a particular podcast warranted it.

CARLI has a history of using Adobe Connect to record audio and video elements of presentations. This utility can be leveraged to output an audio-only mp3 file for upload to iTunes U, along with a description and title. This is an efficient way to produce a podcast with hosts located in different geographical locations. For hosts located in the same location, using any sound recording software available will result in improved sound quality and efficiency.

The committee liaison requested space within the iTunes U account belonging to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign from Campus Information Technologies and Educational Services. The liaison was then able to customize the space with a CARLI Created Content Committee logo and information about CARLI. A CARLI Gmail account provided an Apple ID for login to the iTunes U site manager. Since the Apple ID is not specific to the liaison, the Created Content Committee or any other individual CARLI staff member, it can be used by other CARLI committees should they also want to create podcasts in the future.

The group decided to employ rotating hosts and identified a topic for the first podcast: an interview with a representative from Digital POWRR (see http://digitalpowrr.niu.edu/). The Digital POWRR (Preserving (Digital) Objects with Restricted Resources) Project is a collaborative project to assist smaller institutions to engage in digital preservation projects. CARLI was concurrently providing a separate webinar series on digital preservation, so the committee felt this would be a timely topic. Jaime Schumacher, the director of the Digital POWRR Project was confirmed as an interviewee in the committee's January meeting. Lynne

Thomas later joined the podcast as a second interviewee. Paul Go and Anne Shelley served as co-hosts for the first podcast.

Podcast Process

The first podcast was recorded and published on April 15, 2014. It can be accessed at the following link, or by navigating the iTunes application to iTunes U (go to Universities and Colleges and choose University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign):

https://itunes.apple.com/us/itunes-u/carli-created-content-committee/id863218315?mt=10

The first podcast, being an interview, needed to start with questions. These were solicited from the committee and shared on the committee's wiki. The questions were gathered over a month time period and were then organized and edited for podcast flow. Questions were sent to the representatives from the Digital POWRR group in advance to give them time to formulate constructive answers. The questions were developed with the following goals in mind:

- to provide an overview of the project, its history and purpose
- to give a sense of where the project is going, what is next, and how to keep up with project milestones
- best practices the listener's institution could use to make the podcast relevant to the professional audience members
- to provide a list of resources that are helpful for the end listener

Because Digital POWRR has spoken at a number of conferences and meetings, it was deemed imperative that we get something new from this podcast, rather than merely giving the representatives a chance to rehash the same information. However, because the listenership may not be familiar with Digital POWRR for any number of reasons, we wanted to make sure there was an overview and a deep understanding of the project. And finally, because this podcast hopes to be relevant to the professional librarians, archivists, and curators listening, as well as the general interest listener, we wanted to try to get relevant information that could be potentially implemented in their home institutions.

The co-hosts also scripted the beginning and ending of the podcast, dividing the parts of the introduction of the podcast between them. The intro selected is as follows:

- Hello and welcome to the CARLI Created Content Committee podcast. We are your hosts: (insert host names here)
- This podcast is a product of the CARLI Created Content Committee and is the first in a series of podcasts intended to highlight or showcase things of interest to those involved in digital projects in libraries, archives, museums, and related fields. CARLI is the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois. More information about CARLI and its committees can be found at www.carli.illinois.edu.

This is followed by the specifics of the podcast. By selecting a unified introduction, we hope to give the podcast a voice separate from the individual voices of the hosts, which will change from production to production.

Once the questions and timing were determined, we recorded the actual podcast. This was done using Adobe Connect, which CARLI uses for many of its webinars. This was chosen because the software was in use and known and we could easily (in theory) extract audio from it. There were some drawbacks to using Adobe Connect. The interviewees shared a computer for their end of the recording and did not use headphones and a separate microphone but rather the computer's built-in components. Because of this, there was some echoing which meant they needed to mute their microphone when questions were asked. This caused some delays between questions and answers that would not have been present in a studio environment. There were also issues retrieving the recording from the software. While this was eventually worked out, these complications were unexpected.

The second podcast was published on May 2, 2014. It can be accessed at the following link, or by navigating the iTunes application to iTunes U (go to Universities and Colleges and choose University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign): https://itunesu.itunes.apple.com/feed/id863218315.

This podcast is based on the presentation the committee did at the 2014 IACRL Preconference on *Web Analytics for Digital Collections: Appraising Collections and Assessing Impact*. This made planning the content easy, and the co-hosts decided to use the podcast format to have a more conversational version of the presentation content. While there were some notes about content to definitely cover, the co-hosts aimed to keep it as spontaneous as possible.

Because the co-hosts were located in the same city, they chose to record in person, using a new recording studio set up at Loyola University Chicago library. While they intended to use Audacity, it was not yet installed on the computer, so they used the built in Windows Sound

Recorder (after testing sound quality). The file was saved to a network drive, and later imported into Camtasia, edited, and exported as an mp3, which was sent to the committee liaison over Dropbox. This worked with no complications, but does require access to sound editing software with the ability to create mp3 files. Audacity is an open source and very robust sound editing tool, but requires additional plugins to import and export some file types (including mp3). Camtasia is very easy to use and has no file limitations, and so may be the best option if it is available (many libraries have a copy available).

Conclusions

The committee is pleased with the first two podcasts and has ideas for enhancing the quality of the project and ensuring its sustainability. Normalizing the recording process would provide a consistent experience for regular listeners. For instance, stating the date of the recording at the beginning of the podcast and crafting the written podcast description in a generally consistent way will present the individual recordings as episodes of a continuing program. A unified introduction would give the podcast a voice separate from the individual voices of different hosts.

Coordinating co-hosts so that they are able to record at the same location whenever possible would minimize problems with remote audio. There has also been discussion about providing methods for feedback from and interaction with listeners, perhaps via email.

The initial decision to keep the format simple -- audio only, without music and other extraneous polish -- has proven to be a good one. This has enabled a quick turnaround from recording to publishing. Using a good external microphone made the second recording and editing process easier and is recommended for future episodes. Rotating hosts will help keep the project sustainable, spreading out the time commitments involved in planning and recording. The initial project aimed to create one podcast each month; these procedures should make maintaining this rate a sustainable goal. The committee remains open to adding video in the future as warranted by the podcast subject and as the participants become more familiar with the process as a whole.

Since the podcasts have not yet been publicized, their effectiveness in reaching audiences within and beyond the CARLI membership cannot yet be assessed. The committee has discussed various options for promoting the podcasts, including publicity via CARLI outlets such as the website and email discussion lists, contacting relevant bloggers to suggest adding links to the podcasts on their blogs, and leveraging social media. As technical issues are solved and the process for creating and distributing the podcasts becomes more familiar, the group expects to spend more time on promotion, both internal and external to CARLI membership.

The Created Content Committee views this project as a success, and is eager to continue to record and disseminate podcasts at a regular interval in the coming year. While further work will undoubtedly bring new ideas, solutions, and questions, we feel that this document is a useful review of the planning and decisions that went into the creation of our first pair of podcasts, and that our experience, along with the lessons that we learned and the questions that arose will be of use not just to this committee moving forward, but to anyone considering the creation of this sort of podcast series.