



The Clarion

Vol. 15 No. 11 Resident Newsmagazine of The Clare Nov. 15, 2023



This is a clarion,
a medieval
trumpet
with a shrill,
clear sound.
Let us not be shrill,
but let us be clear.

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Editorial staff: Dorothy Oliver Pirovano, editor; Peg Corwin, Marshall Froker, Linda Hill-Chinn, Sally Kinnamon, Christine Lyon

Contributors: Claudia Boatright, Robbe Buescher, Cathy Burke, Joanne Celewycz, John Clum, Jackie Gilbert, Jack Jennings, Anne Laubscher, Christine Lyon, Karol Moller, Savannah Pena, Dorothy Oliver Pirovano, Judith Podmore, Bev Rogers, Marlene Spigner, Pat Terry, Ed Wentz

Podcasts: What are they?

by Jack Jennings

Last July I received an email from Michael Feuer, an old friend and the Dean of the Graduate School of Education and Human Development at George Washington University (GW) in Washington, D.C. Michael asked if I would appear on a podcast he would moderate on education reform, civics education and other issues.

I agreed because I am familiar with the issues and have often participated in events using the same or similar formats. Our discussion took place in late August. After editing, the podcast was posted in early September on the internet.

About 40 podcasts that George Washington University has done to date in its series titled EdFix are on that site on the net. My discussion with Michael appears as Episode 37, Policy Perspectives and Possibilities.



Policy Perspectives and Possibilities - A Conversation with Jack Jennings <https://directory.libsyn.com/episode/index/show/edfix/>

On June 17, 2020, I appeared on another podcast sponsored by the Learning First Alliance. That group, composed of top leaders of the nation's largest public education organizations, seeks agreement on common policies among its members.

Rich Long, the Alliance's executive director, and I recorded a session of about an hour discussing such issues as funding and (Cont. on page 2)



The Clare is a welcoming community that fosters a culture of belonging and mutual respect for those who live and work here. We appreciate the diversity of our backgrounds, beliefs, accomplishments and abilities, and strive to be inclusive, helpful and kind as we care about and for each other.
—Resident Advisory Council, Oct. 2, 2018

changes in schooling due to the pandemic. Here is the link to that podcast. <https://www.learningfirst.org/jack-jennings-podcast/>

Before the recording sessions, Michael and Rich both told me that their organizations found the podcasts to be useful in keeping their members up to date on current issues. A good time for teachers, school principals, superintendents and others to hear these discussions is in the car as they drive to and from work.

When my friends told me that the sessions would be podcasts, I nodded my head but did not know exactly what that meant. I remembered years ago that when a businessman announced his development of yet another "new math," he did so on a podcast. Therefore, I thought that this must be some prestigious form of communication.

One day in the course of conversation, I told my friend Dorothy Pirovano about the podcast we made at George Washington University. Being a curious person, she asked me questions about podcasts that I could not answer. Therefore, she suggested that I write an article that would inform Clare residents about this development in technology.

When I followed her suggestion, I learned that this term--podcasting---first appeared in 2004 in the Guardian, an influential newspaper in the U.K. The next 20 years was a time of fast growth as podcasts' usefulness became known.

A helpful way to think of podcasts is "radio on demand." There are podcasts about almost any topic and you can listen at your own convenience by going online to the many sites that offer them.

I had not realized that podcasts are now the rage in corporate offices, universities and beyond. In South Korea, 58 percent of the population uses them at least once a month, as do 40 percent of Spaniards. On a weekly basis, 22 percent of the population of the United States turns to them, as does 12.5 percent of the people living in the United Kingdom.

Podcast definition

Trying to understand the reasons for these developments, I went to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, which is available now--of course--on the net. The dictionary said that the word podcast means "a program (as of music or talk) made

available in digital form for automatic download over the internet."

The first element of the definition is that it is "a program (as of music or talk)." That means a podcast is not a machine like a computer or a device like an iPhone. Rather, it is the information imparted to listeners by means of a computer, device and like instruments.

I had not realized it at the time, but what G.W. and the Alliance were offering to their members was what I came to consider a "classical podcast." The speakers were Michael or Rich and me imparting our views on education-related issues. The setting was similar to a classroom or a televised talk show.

Not all podcasts use that classical form. Today, after several decades of development, there are different formats being used in podcasts. These include fitness sessions, storytelling and music.

The second element of the definition is that this information is "made available in digital form." In other words, whatever appears on the net as a podcast must first be converted into digits which is how the internet communicates among its viewers and with the outside world.

The last element is that the information has been prepared "for automatic download over the internet." The purpose of podcasts is to make information of all types readily available. Thus, allowing people not only to see the information but also to copy it from the net is essential to carrying out that purpose. Also, intrinsic is the ability to take that action on one's own instead of having to wait for prior consent.

Those are the essential elements of a podcast. They are loose provisions when they involve the content of the information or the format in which that information is presented. But these provisions are demanding about how a podcast must make its information technically accessible and readily available.

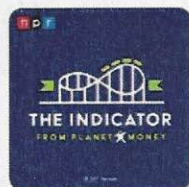
Another characteristic is that **podcasts have traditionally been audio only.** In the past, only a few were both audio and video but that number is growing.

Many podcasts are free, as has been the tradition, but some large companies require a fee or subscription; some have ads. Examples of free podcast sites are Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Google Podcasts.

Top podcasts in Business



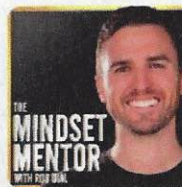
Planet Money
NPR



The Indicator
from Planet...
NPR



Marketplace
Marketplace

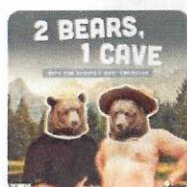


The Mindset
Mentor
Rob Dial



Jocko Podcast
Jocko DEFCOR ...

Top podcasts in Comedy



2 Bears, 1 Cave
with Tom...
YMH Studios



Wait Wait...
Don't Tell Me!
NPR



Conan O'Brien
Needs A Friend
Team Coco & E...



Morbid
Morbid Networ...



Office Ladies
Earwolf & Jenn...

Top podcasts in Arts



Myths and
Legends
Jason Weiser, ...



Fresh Air
NPR



The Moth
The Moth



99% Invisible
Roman Mars



Snap Judgment
Presents...
Snap Judgment

Sample top podcasts in just three of many broad categories

Why podcasts now?

A major reason for the spread of podcasts is that it is relatively easy to make them. At a minimum, all that is required is a microphone of high-quality, some type of computer, and some software for editing and uploading the podcast to a site on the net like Google.

Since they are inexpensive to make, podcasts provide a democracy of sorts in expressing one's opinions. They are another step in making information universally available. §

Make your own podcast?

Simply Google "how do I make a podcast" and up will come dozens of sites that will tell you how.

Beware, however, as some have costs associated with their advice, particularly those that are labeled as "sponsored." Read up before you try to record.