

Downloading Podcast News

With the rise of podcasting, many individuals and organizations are finding that podcasting is a great way to distribute information, from music and comedy shows to talk shows, even podcast news. CNET is one of the groups that is distributing a news podcast. CNET, being an online technology site, naturally found a niche distributing a tech news related podcast. CNET's recent podcasts covered such topics as viruses that attack cell phones, problems with Google's software, China's web restrictions and the "Great Firewall of China", and the FTC's attack on spyware. These news items were distributed in a sound file called an mp3 file that is downloadable to a listener's computer for listening whenever they wish. While these files were available straight from CNET's site, the majority of them are shared through the use of an RSS file. An RSS file is a small piece of XML coding that is downloadable by programs designed to read it. These programs are called podcast clients, and the user can input the address of the RSS files that hold the information on the feed. The feed will contain links to the media files of the podcast, and will download the new updates automatically.

More sites than CNET are finding that podcast news is an exploitable technology. The British Broadcasting Corporation podcasts some of its programs, as well as the US radio network NPR. The NPR, because its work is created by a variety of different groups, treats podcasts differently from show to show. The NPR show "This American Life" distributes a podcast of the show through a site called audible.com, which allows feed listeners to subscribe to the feed for a small fee and download the show. The NPR Hourly News show, on the other hand, shares a short 5 minute broadcast that summarizes the news for free. Since the NPR is taking a radio show and converting it into a file that is downloadable by the user, little is lost in the translation. The sound is designed to convey the entire story, and so podcast subscribers are able to treat the podcast as nothing more than TIVO for the radio. ABC's podcast of the news show Nightline, on the other hand, is

simply the sound track from the television show. This has been one of the criticisms of the Nightline podcast, because by merely stripping the sound from what is designed as a television show, much information is not given to the users. Listeners have problems telling who is who because they miss the visual cues that were supposed to be there, and there is no truly easy way to convert the shows. For this reason, some news shows have been moving from audio podcasts to video ones. They can take the video information directly from the show that is broadcast, lower the visual resolution to shrink the file, and distribute it online as a podcast.

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