

The History of the iPod Podcast

What is now called a podcast traces its origins to the first iPod podcasts, the creation of distributed mp3 files that could be downloaded and played on Apple's music player, the iPod. When the iPod came out, and users discovered what a wonderful thing it was for holding music, some people had the idea of loading things that weren't necessarily songs. Some of the people that got their hands on the iPod took the route of reverse engineering the iPod and loading on different firmware, or operating system, but others had the idea of sharing small sound files that could be played on the iPod. The technology for distributing the files already existed, with RSS feeds. RSS feeds were a means of generating machine readable files that could share information between a server and a user. Many blogs already used them to keep readers up to date with the latest posts, but some hopeful podcasters had the idea of enclosing links to sound files within the RSS feed and downloading the file to the computer.

With the change in RSS feeds, iPod podcast took off, and podcasting became a popular way to share files. Users saw podcasting as a way to become radio hosts, or dj's, and a variety of podcasts began popping up. Software was written to automatically check the RSS feeds, extract the links to the podcast episodes, and download the files. These programs became known as podcast clients.

By this time, podcasting had moved beyond the iPod, and they were not simply making an iPod podcast anymore. Some people had figured out how to use even the PlayStation Portable gaming console as a podcast player. It was more difficult that downloading podcasts to the iPod, since the PSP used a different format for its files, but PSP podcasts began popping up. In addition, podcasting made inroads to the wider audience of people without iPods, who simply saw podcasting as an extremely convenient way to receive news, music, and entertainment over the internet.

Today, while the iPod podcast type still exists, fewer

people subscribe to podcasts as a way of gaining portable media files they can listen to anywhere. Although that is still an attractive part of podcasting, it seems to be eclipsed by the ease with which podcasting has become a content delivery system. Now, podcasting has become tied up with the rising number of audio and video blogs, where blogging is done not by post, but through media files uploaded to the blog. These blogs, and podcasting in general, take advantage of the shrinking cost of broadband internet connections, and the rising number of people with high speed access to offer a picture of the internet rich with multimedia files.

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