

Podcasting as a medium to share STEAM Fields

Podcasts, while only about a decade old in their modern incarnation, have exploded in popularity in recent years. There are tens-of-thousands of podcasts on every imaginable topic hosted by enthusiasts and well known figureheads of their respective fields. According to a recent Pew study, nearly one-third of Americans have listened to a podcast. Podcasts like NPR's "Serial" have gained large followings and brought their stories to the attention of massive audiences. Podcasts are the ideal communication medium for STEAM fields because they can convey more information than simple tweets or brief media coverage and with more enthusiasm than written articles. They are also easy for anyone to listen to on their commute, during exercise, or any other activity. Subscription to a podcast allows the listener to automatically download new episodes to any electronic device, facilitating content consumption with greater ease than either web pages or print media.

We present two podcasts covering the topics of geoscience and spaceflight that are just finishing their first year on the air. The "Don't Panic Geocast" hosted by John Leeman and Shannon Dulin, and "The Orbital Mechanics Podcast" hosted by David Fourman and Ben Etherington with research assistants Steve Pestana and Connor West. Recording the shows involves some technical setup, but once that is complete, they are easily distributed to subscribers' mobile devices through internet syndication. Listeners can also listen in a web browser if they prefer.

In producing these shows, we receive feedback in the form of tweets, emails, and comments from the audience that shows they are engaged and interested. Many enjoy receiving news about the fields, learning technical details, or just being able to interact with other like-minded people that they otherwise may not have met. Some listeners get involved to the point of contributing their own research on past show topics. The serial nature of podcasts increases the collaborations between listeners and podcast creators, which may develop into productive research and teaching partnerships that are crucial to STEAM fields. We intend to share some of the behind-the-scenes production techniques, show structure, and workflows we use to try to bring in a broad audience and share our enjoyment of our fields.