A review of using podcasts in academic libraries: A case study at Shahid Beheshti University

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ABSTRACT

Using Web2.0 capabilities in academic libraries, librarians can provide their users with more special and better information services. Podcasting and vodcasting are the most common consequences of Web2.0 used for publishing online information. Most of librarians suppose that podcasts serve as information services in the Web2.0 collection. So, current paper aims to introduce the role that podcasts play in identification of academic libraries services, discuss their role as new electronic information resources, and deal with features and advantages of podcasting in academic libraries and information centers. This paper, presents experience for library of Education and Psychology Faculty in using podcasts. All scientific lectures of this faculty accessible from library webpage and podcasts link. So users can click on their needed files and download their needed audio & visual files or save them in their cellphone, Ipad, note book, mp3 player and so on. Also downloaded podcasts and videocasts would be useful for e-learning. By this services, all students and scholars can easily use information resources such as audio & visual files of speeches, conferences, thesis defense meetings and so on.

Keywords: Academic libraries; Podcasting; Videocasting; Shahid Beheshti University; Web2.0

INTRODUCTION

Web2.0 or reading-writing web, is amongst the new instances of the World Wide Webnext generation that allows the users to create, change, and publish the dynamic content of all kinds. Web2.0 points to the second generation of the network infrastructure and is called reading-writing network by the librarians that is where the users are both consuming and producing online contents. Podcast is amongst the "social softwares" considered as Web2.0 products. In today's borderless world, podcast can keep people connected. Despite the mono-dimensional and traditional atmosphere, it has not only prevented people from dissociation, but also supported the social and scientific collaborations. Indeed, "social software" is a device which makes it possible for two or more users to share and associate free of geographical limits. Its ultimate goal is to create the knowledge network the members of which are exchanging valuable and impressive knowledge.

Podcasting is a method of providing content by publishing the audio file on the internet. It is also a general name for an audio program placed on a digital music player, commonly Ipod, by the users. The term "Podcast" is a combination of Ipod and Broadcasting and "podcasting" is the act of broadcasting and publishing the podcast. It is a new service among the Weblogs, RSS, and so on thanks to the social web. Podcasting origin goes back to early 2000, and the technical components were available since 2001. In 2003, regular podcasts appeared on famous websites and their supporting softwares spread. In 2004, the term "Podcast" was used for the first time. At late 2004, thousands of podcasts were available. In summer 2004, 24 searches in Google search engine retrieved for the word "podcast". In 2005, Yahoo also launched podcast service. In the same year, Oxford new dictionary chose "podcast" as the best word of the year. In 2006, Google search engine retrieved 242 million searches for the term "podcast". The increased rate of podcast production, scientific papers published, and numerous workshops held in this regard show the popularity of the podcast amongst the users. Videocast, shortened as Vodcast and Vidcast, is the continuous publication of the video pictures via the Internet. The term is a combination of Video and Cast. Steve Garfield started his videoblog on January 1, 2004. The first videocast about natural history was published in Montana State University on October 1, 2005(Wikipedia, 2007). Usually, the same devices used for digital music players are used for listening to podcasts and watching videocasts. The devices are small and portable so that the users can apply the audio-video content anytime and everywhere. After downloading from internet, the content is usable offline while in other methods the connection is required for using the content.

In podcasts and videocasts, users have full control over the content such as rewinding and fast-forwarding, listening and watching a part of the content, and so on. Users can use the content as much as they want without browsing the Webto access the contents. By setting up the software and adding the podcast and videocast address to the list, copying the content to PC and finally to the player device, file transferring will be done automatically, and the user have access to the latest data in his/her device. Figure 1 simply shows a podcast creation. Academic libraries and information centers according to their needs in various periods use numerous technologies. After forming the user oriented concept instead of library oriented, applying technologies have been changed. Web2 bestowed many benefits for libraries and their users. The trends in social software and collaboration technologies caused the users expectations to be changed and the libraries have to match themselves with the users needs (Stephens, 2005).

Users' information demands of academic libraries are mainly parallel with research goals and fulfilling main organization missions. So, these users need to have fast and easily access to credible, organized and up-to-date information. Podcast and videocast are another form of data transferring to the users in the shortest time. Academic libraries apply them for free and optimum use of information sources by the users. Free access movement developed in response to exorbitant costs of information resources. However, with the advent of new technologies and software, data gathering and distribution will be done in a lower cost. One of the benefits of free access is broader availability of scientific resources for libraries in smaller institutes or those placed in weaker economics all over the world (Anderson, 2004). On the other hand, Web2.0 has changed the world in a way that doing complex tasks is possible having little knowledge

(Jowett, 2008). Therefore, podcasts and videocasts can be used as a media for free data transferring by users (McKinney, 2009).

Academic libraries not only can prepare podcasts and videocasts by themselves, but also they can search the Web for podcasts and videocasts with high quality adequate for users' needs. Because everyone can prepare podcast and videocast and publish them in the internet, it is very important to find and select podcasts with the best quality. Therefore, when librarians start choosing from podcasts in the web, they should consider their credibility and the publisher reputation. Also, they should select a format for the files to be easily downloadable and usable. Using podcasts and videocasts cause more and more connection between the library and its users and receiving more feedback from them, resulting in improvement to the planning and performance of the library.

According to the nature of podcasts and videocasts that is ease of creation and simplified usage; they can be applied in various tasks as follows:

i. As a radio or TV station, they can be used with the least cost via a PC so that researchers and users can be informed of library events, news, lectures and workshops (Barnes, 2007). All kinds of distance learning that need oral and pictorial explanation, such as how to use a database or virtual tours, can be performed with podcasts and videocasts.
ii. They can be used to prepare audio sources to serve the blind and low vision people.
iii. Recording educational home and amateur movies from classrooms and workshops to present to all students especially deaf, slow-learning and exceptional ones and to ease the learning process for them.
iv. Advertising the library services by the means of marketing methods with the help of sales and marketing experts of the organization.

Capabilities of Podcast and Videocast

With considering special features of podcasts and videocasts as electronic resources in libraries, it seems that their management process is similar to other resources that are containing selection, storage, organizing and distribution. In the selection and storage stage of the podcasts and videocasts, audio and video files can be selected and retrieved via internet. Different methods of recording such files are like other resources or by making an index published in the library website or weblog. The index will be revised and updated according to the changing internet addresses in specific interval depending on the policy of master organization. It is suggested by Moradi, et al (2008) that organizing process of such resources are conducting via folksonomy and terminology controlling. Consequently, the process will facilitate the librarian's tasks and user's access to the required data.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Approach of this paper is review of literature and case studies about using podcasts in libraries. Podcasts and vodcasts were introduced in Iran in Fall 2007. After 7 years, a few libraries in Iran use these media for their users. Aim of this

research is present an experience in library of Psychology and Education Faculty Shahid Beheshti University. We describe our activities for providing new services for our library clients.

Case Studies

- In 2005, public library of Orange County in Florida started a project aiming at using podcasts and videocasts in 14 branches of the library in the county. It contained limitations and experiences in presenting such files into the internet, and showed that most people use MP3 format and Windows Media Player for playing the files. With regard to the warm welcome from the users, educational aspects of the project can be emphasized (Sampson, 2006).
- Special Library of Mississippi State University used podcast as a model for collecting governmental documents in special libraries. The library introduced podcast as a tool for information service, collecting instructions and awareness of researchers and professors about documents and resources (Barnez, 2007).
- American Special Libraries Association[1] has encouraged its librarians to use podcasts. The association believes that by this method, the librarians can distribute resources to the users and do the services more efficiently. Special libraries are able to put the resources in their websites as audio or video files to be downloaded by users. The libraries can assess the rate of podcast usage by statistics analysis.
- By designing a webpage, the library of Kentucky University[2] let the users to have access to audio-video files of the conferences, lectures, scientific debates, and the sessions held in the university. The files are categorized and downloadable.
- Alden library[3] in Ohio University, presents an educational tour of library via podcast.
- Library of Congress[4] contribute to keep the librarians' knowledge up to date by podcasting archive subjects and library and information science.
- Jowitt (2008) studied the usage rate of podcast in UCOL – Universal College of Learning, analyzed the amount of users' understanding of the device, and estimated its usage rate in the future. The result showed a difference in usage rate of the educational podcasts amongst the various classes of users the most of which welcomed podcast as a useful device in education.
- Peoples and Tilley (2011) defined three types of podcasts: institutional podcasts, episodic podcasts, and audiobooks. All podcasts share common issues concerning discovery and access and digital curation. The authors suggest that podcasts should be included in academic library collections, as research has shown that podcasts are becoming a trusted information resource. Bierman and Valentino (2011) found that approximately one third of American Research Libraries have a podcasting initiative, the subjects vary widely and social media are only used occasionally to promote the podcasts.

The authors conclude that podcasting is a technology that has not yet reached its zenith and libraries have many avenues left still to explore using this technology. Sarkar (2012) found that library podcasts have some basic features and are implemented for specific purposes. It also revealed that adoption of podcast varies along the geographical regions. The study found that extension of implementation of podcast is high in North

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[1] . http://www.sla.org/content/resources/podcasts/index.cfm

[2] . http://www.wku.edu/library/podcast/

[3] . http://www.library.ohiou.edu/podcasts/?page_id=14

[4] . http://www.loc.gov/podcasts/

American libraries whereas intension of adoption of podcast is high in Australian libraries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some researches that are related to using podcasts in libraries include:

Asadi, et al (2013) in their research, investigated librarians' familiarity with podcasting and their attitudes about such tools as a library service. The results indicate little knowledge and experience of Iranian librarians with podcasting tools and as a result their attitudes about those technologies is also vague. Also, it is demonstrated that unlike the importance of podcasts, there is currently little use of them in public libraries in Iran. Well designed instructions of the librarians can improve the current state of podcasts as a media in libraries.

Baro, Idiodi, and Godfrey (2013) investigated the level of awareness and use of Web2.0 tools by librarians in university libraries in Nigeria. It emerged that the librarians were more familiar with social networking sites, instant messaging, media sharing sites, blogs and wikis. The popularity of these Web2.0 tools made them the most frequently used by the librarians. Web2.0 tools like Flickr, RSS feeds, podcasts, social bookmarking, were among the least used. The study revealed that librarians use Web2.0 tools mostly for reference services online, library news/events, training resources, and image and video sharing.

Swapna and Francis (2013) in their paper reveals that though the websites provide lot of useful information to the users, further improvement both in contents and management of it is needed in most of the library websites

Gill, Gulati and Saini (2014) states that Podcasts are an effective way of disseminating information in diverse fields and alternative method to present the content into audio format.

Boateng and Liu, (2014) explored Web2.0 technologies usage and trends in the top 100 US academic libraries as exemplified through the academic library websites. Findings indicated that All 100 academic libraries had a social media presence on Facebook and Twitter. The vodcast and podcast had 47 percent and 46 percent participation rates respectively, while social bookmarking/tagging were also used by 39 percent of the academic libraries.

The experience of Shahid Beheshti University

Since 2012, Library of Psychology and Education Faculty in Shahid Beheshti University decides to present new services to its users. We designed a single portal for this library. In this portal, after description of library, users can access to library weblog, library software, list of dissertations, research plans, free e-journals, free e-books, references resources and other databases. In figures 1, Portal of Psychology and Education Faculty Library, Shahid Beheshti University can be seen. The Faculty of Education and

Psychology at the Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran has four courses that include: psychology, counseling, education and information science. In this faculty scientific lectures are hold weekly. Students and faculty members who are not able to attend these meetings can access to the podcasts. Audio files are available and make use of its contents. Since fall 2013 these files accessible for users. In the future, screencasts for the production of learning contents will be used. Users can access to the podcasts the through the library Webpage. Users can simply access these files by clicking on each subject. Users will be able to download or use audio and video files simultaneously. In Figure 2, webpage of library podcast can be seen.

Figure 1: Portal of Psychology and Education Faculty Library, Shahid Beheshti Univeristy

RESULTS

There are always new roles to define for academic libraries that complete the previous ones and develop library's goals and sights. Librarians have understood that they can make their users satisfied by getting familiar with new technologies and applying them. It is necessary for librarians to prepare different kinds of references and deliver qualified data in various formats in order to meet all users' expectations. This is also the same in gathering data from various net resources which have to be suitable and qualified enough. Libraries are usually involving in designing websites and portals in order to prepare wide access to data resources for the users and prevent data overload which is a key role for libraries. Their goal should be made in a way that users can access all resources from their home or offices along with preventing time-consuming searches for audio and visual data. In addition, it is necessary for librarians to benefit from means of e-communication such as emails to make it easier for users to contact website's

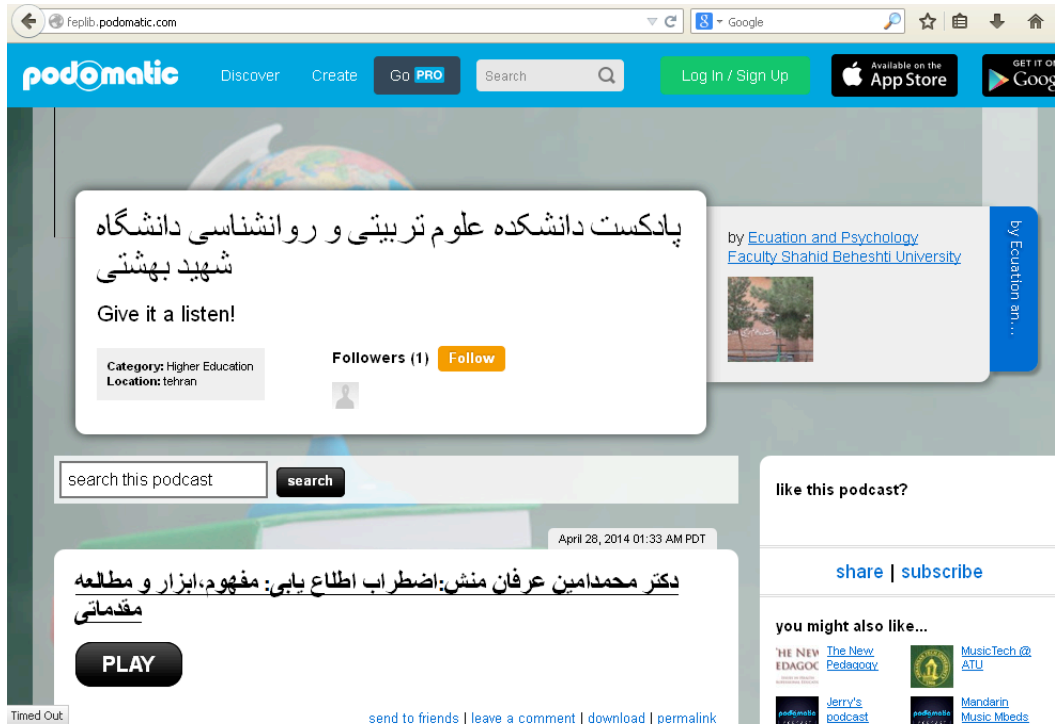managers and ask for audio or visual files to be loaded as podcasts or videocasts in the website.

Figure 2: Library podcasts of Education and Psychology Faculty

Academic libraries at different organizations take advantage of using social networks, electronically and technical RSS teams for informing as low-cost and beneficial methods for introducing and publishing new library references at different organizations. Podcasts and videocasts are gifts of social Webwhich can be improved with the help of potential feature of social cooperation and teamwork. Proficiency increase in creating cooperative communications, preparing means of web-based identification of important data, digital loaning, are among other suggested functions which can take advantage of of podcasts and videocasts. Different kinds of academic libraries can support their user's especially technical experts of their master organization by using podcasting and videocasting technologies because it's a facilitating means of decision making for managers in administrative issues.

Library of Education and Psychology Faculty, Shahid Behehsti University, has a new missions. It want's to go over the traditional services to its users. In new era and changes of communication world, it should presents user friendly services. Providing podcasts of lectures as electronic resources is one of the main services that this library offers to its clients. It seems that it can be useful for all students and faculty members, especially for distance learning. This library is the pioneer for presenting new services such as: QR, Podcasting. All students and faculty members of Education and Psychology Faculty in Shahid Behehsti University, even from other Iranian universities can access to scientific podcast using the library webpage. S.R.Ranganathan in 1931 proposed 5 laws for libraries. His fifth law states that *The library is a growing organism*. So, libraries should

offer new and innovative services to their users. The library of Education and Psychology Faculty in Shahid Behehsti University tries to act on the basis of fifth law of Ranganathan. This is a pioneer for presenting of new services like: QR, Podcasting and so on in Shahid Beheshti University and this is a pattern for other libraries in this university.

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