Archiving

Critical readers may contend that young scholars should be less concerned with networking and more concerned with producing research. Podcasting, however, is a perfect medium for gaining access to nonacademic stakeholders and archiving

livestreams, Snapchat filters, Twitter bots, and promotional material such as stickers, coffee mugs, and koozies. It is fun and, through promotion, I have amassed a wide array of skills that I would not have thought to seek out otherwise (thanks, YouTube).

When done thoughtfully, this co-constitutive model of knowledge production transcends personal benefits: it creates a valuable and authentic public good.

qualitative research material. Similar to the networking benefits outlined previously, podcasting gives the researcher a reason to reach out and solicit interviews from nonacademic stakeholders; they may be more likely to participate because they receive a concrete output for their time (i.e., they may use the podcast for personal or business promotion, which indirectly benefits the podcaster). Thus, podcasting has the potential to increase a young scholar's access to industry practitioners, whose insights can be incorporated into academic research papers.

For example, I recently published a paper on social media campaigning in the 2016 US presidential election (Bossetta 2018), and podcast interviews with practitioners from the Donald Trump, Marco Rubio, and Rand Paul campaigns were key sources of qualitative data. As an additional benefit, these podcast interviews are openly accessible (a requirement for many grant funders), and they provide a resource for interested readers to delve into the full context of the conversation—not only snippets that appear in the paper.

Moreover, the open-access quality of podcasts allows research to shortcut long publishing times and circumvent journalistic paywalls. Especially for political science, disseminating research findings quickly and widely maximizes their opportunity for social impact. The aforementioned interviews, for instance, were picked up by scientists in the European Commission who were investigating the political implications of campaign microtargeting. More than benefiting my own research, these podcasts informed the work of regulators and, indirectly, contributed to the Commission's Communication, "Tackling Online Disinformation: A European Approach."

Learning

Archiving research material provides clear benefits for publishing and policy, but the primary benefit of podcasting—by far—is the vast amount of knowledge and skills that a podcaster acquires through the process. Each stage of podcast production facilitates learning and skill acquisition. Scouting new material encourages exposure to new topics while keeping abreast (or ahead) of current affairs. Preparing for an interview requires critical engagement with the work of a researcher or a practitioner. The recording process, over time, helps a podcaster hone communication skills and extract the best interview material. Even editing—the most arduous and time-consuming process—begets a valuable byproduct in that repeated exposure to an expert's insights facilitates knowledge absorption. Furthermore, publishing and promotion encourages innovation, experimentation, and creativity. I have promoted *Social Media and Politics* through teaching, presentation slides, Facebook

Although podcasts are a promising medium for academic outreach, the main benefactor of any podcast series is, in fact, the podcaster. As with any activity that facilitates personal embetterment, these benefits do not materialize without effort. Conservatively, I estimate that each podcast I produce takes approximately 10 hours from start to finish. Definitively, however, I can affirm that the knowledge, opportunities, skills, and satisfaction I acquire through podcasting immensely outweigh the time expended.

My intention in this article was to outline key benefits of podcasting for social scientists. I conclude, however, by stating emphatically that podcasting is not a self-serving means to an end. A podcaster, especially an academic one, should always produce content with the interests of an audience (real or intended) in mind. The art of podcasting, at its crux, is the creative process of making material that provides value to both producer and audience. When done thoughtfully, this co-constitutive model of knowledge production transcends personal benefits: it creates a valuable and authentic public good. ∎

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A PODCASTING PRIMER

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Although this spotlight focuses on the personal and professional aspects of podcasting by political scientists, the experiences outlined in the contributions may inspire you to create your own podcast. This podcasting primer is for those who want to follow the examples of the contributing authors or who are simply curious about the mechanics of podcasting. We first introduce key conceptual factors to consider when structuring your podcast's content and then provide guidance on the technical elements required to bring that content to life.

At the outset, all podcasts need a name, a theme, and a format. These conceptual aspects are relatively independent from one another, but they work together to create continuity in the content of a podcast series. First, the name chosen for your show "will be *the number one most important identifier people will associate with you*, next to your own name" (Hanks 2015, 36;

emphasis in original). Listeners will use the podcast's name to search for your show on the web or in their favorite podcast player.

Second, the theme relates to the podcast's topic or niche: "What issues will it cover?" As the articles in this spotlight suggest, political science podcasts can engage with various aspects of the field, ranging from discussions of current events to presentations of new books. The theme can be broad or specific; however, it creates the podcast's identity and helps the podcaster select content for the series. Choose a theme that builds on your areas of expertise or interests and that showcases your natural talents (Hanks 2015, 47–48).

Third, the podcast's format structures how content is presented to the audience. The number of hosts and the type of dialogue are two elements to consider because the former has direct implications for the latter. A podcast with one host is arguably best suited for interviews (conducted via online services such as Skype) or deep dives into a specific topic, creating an intimate dialogue with the listener. Co-hosting affords a slightly different dynamic in which listeners tune in for a regular dialogue between the hosts, who might discuss current events or offer contrasting perspectives on an issue.

The theme and format of a podcast work together to shape the content of a series, but this content needs to be recorded and distributed technically. Fortunately, advancements in technology and the growth of the podcast medium have greatly reduced the technical barriers for starting and maintaining a podcast. We next describe the baseline technical resources required for a high-quality podcast: a microphone, a Digital Audio Workstation, and a podcast hosting platform.

A microphone increases the sound quality of a recording. At the broadest level, microphones can be divided into dynamic and condenser mics. Dynamic mics are commonly recommended for podcasting because they reduce ambient noise (e.g., from air conditioners). However, condenser mics can produce a richer sound and are preferred by podcasters who record in a room with good acoustics. The type of microphone cable also matters. Expensive microphones tend to use an "XLR" cable, which requires a separate piece of hardware (i.e., a mixer). For most podcasting purposes, however, a microphone with a standard USB cable that plugs directly into your computer will suffice. These types of microphones typically range from $40 to $150 and produce great sound quality.

The second key technical element we recommend is a DAW (i.e., Digital Audio Workstation), which is a type of computer software that enables the recording and editing of a sound file. You record directly from the microphone into the DAW, which then can be used to polish the sound file in several ways. Segments of the recording (e.g., "ums" and "uhs") can be removed, the sound level can be increased or decreased, and music or other sound clips can be added. The recording's quality also can be enhanced through slightly more advanced techniques, such as adding compression to even out the sound levels and changing

the equalization to remove the echo from a room. DAWs vary in their range of features, ease of use, and price, but they often are offered for one-time purchase or through monthly subscriptions.

Third, like a website, a podcast requires a hosting platform to store the final recording. Podcast hosts provide internet bandwidth so that listeners can stream and download the podcast. They also provide analytics reports so you can understand the location and size of your audience. With many hosts available (e.g., Podbean, Libsyn, and Simplecast), we recommend choosing one that offers unlimited bandwidth, analytics, and a website. Hosting packages typically cost between $10 and $20 per month. Some hosts even offer academic discounts.

In addition to these three essential elements, Hanks (2015, 63) recommends the purchase of a decent pair of headphones. With headphones, you can better assess both the sound of your own voice and the overall mix.

All of these technical details may seem overwhelming. However, it is not unlike the early days of blogging, when you had to learn html code and construct a webpage before writing any content—and then find an audience and build a reputation for quality. The quality of microphones, usability of DAWs, and emergence of podcast hosting services have greatly simplified podcasting while expanding its reach. Although podcasting inevitably is a learning process, we suspect that you will be surprised at how easy it can be.

Nevertheless, managing the enormity of the process means that you should obtain sound advice. National Public Radio (2018a) offers a useful orientation guide to the world of podcasting. Although the guide was produced for a specific project, the essential nuts-and-bolts suggestions it offers cover everything from planning to preparation to production. A helpful companion guide (NPR 2018b) provides advice for involving students in podcasting as a class project or a creative assignment. There also are several active Facebook communities (e.g., "Podcasts We Listen To") where both novice and expert podcasters provide support, feedback, and suggestions. Finally, we want to conclude by offering these parting words of advice: many universities already have a well-equipped recording studio for radio and podcasts. We suggest that you check whether your university has such a facility with staff or students who can help you become a political scientist with a podcast. ∎

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