Rhetorical Roots and Media Future: How Podcasting Fits into the Computers and Writing Classroom

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Transcript of the Podcast
http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/topoi/bowie

With an estimated 30.8 million United States listeners in 2009[1], podcasting is no longer an emerging technology. However, podcasting has not yet been incorporated into many writing or even computers and writing classrooms. This may be because, despite the popularity, podcasting is still a young media. But, the newness of media rarely stops those in computers and writing. Perhaps podcasting has not reached the popularity level in writing classrooms in the US because podcasting does not fall into the category of writing as many see it. But, podcasting has much in common with other genres and media in computers and writing. The focus in both areas—podcasting and computers and writing—on audience, content, purpose, tone, text production, style, and effective communication not only mean that the goals are similar, but also that podcasting is a medium that may help us teach these concepts to our students. Podcasting brings us

[1] Based on the 17 million podcast listeners found in Price, A., Gay, P. and Searle, T. (2006. "A History and Assessment of the Slacker Astronomy Podcast" Astronomy Education Review, 1.5) for 2006 and multiplied by the growth rate of 18% cited in Lewin (2007. "Podcasting Audience Up 18% Since Last Year" http://www.podcastingnews.com/2007/03/22/podcasting-audience-up-18-since-last-year/) for 2007, and then multiplied by this same growth rate for 2008 and 2009.

back to our rhetorical roots of spoken argument and texts. Delivery becomes an important canon again, and the remaining four canons may be applied in ways common to both ancient rhetoric and modern multimedia.

In this podcast article, I respond to Barbara Warnick's call on page 327 of "Looking to the Future" for, [quote] "a move away from printcentric criticism"[unquote]. I examine podcasting as a possible component of the computers and writing classroom. I start with a brief discussion of what podcasting is and provide explanations for other terms I use. If you are familiar with podcasting, you may want to skip my general podcasting discussion. If so, go to approximately time 6:06 in the podcast, or keep listening to see how I define podcasts. After the definitions, I provide a short review of the limited empirical research on podcasting in classrooms and draw on some more general scholarship on digital media. Next, I address how podcasting may be used in classrooms to help students rethink the "old" writing concepts we have been teaching, such as the five canons and audience, tone, purpose, and context, in new ways and consider how students may bring the lessons they learned from podcasting back to their print text writing. I draw on student work for examples of how students are learning through podcasting. In the transcript of this podcast I provide a full works cited and list of relevant links.

[Musical transition]

Podcasting 101 & Definitions

Podcasting is a somewhat controversial term. The term "podcasting" was created in 2004, slightly after Adam Curry's iPodder software was first available to download and transfer podcasting files, according to Rob Walch and Mur Laffery. The term is generally considered to be a portmanteau of i**Pod** and Broad**cast**. However, Dannie Gregorie, the first person to use the term, according to Morris and Terra, did not have the iPod in mind when coining the term. It has since been backronymed as **P**ersonal **O**n-**D**emand broad**cast**ing or, possibly better yet, according to Morris and Terra, **P**ersonal **O**n-**D**emand narrow**cast**ing. Narrowcasting is a more accurate term as it refers to distributing content to a select, narrow audience, whereas broadcasting refers to delivering content to a wide audience, such as everyone who receives the TV or radio signal.

Of course, what the term represents does not alone define it. Podcasts are episodic digital media files distributed over the internet. They are downloaded through web syndication—often RSS feeds or podcatcher software (like iTunes). Normally the files are assumed to be audio or video files, and many people think this is all a podcast is. While podcasts are generally audio or video files, they can be any type of file: .pdfs, .docs, .ppt, .rtfs .pdfs, doc files, PowerPoints, rich text files], and more. These files are different than webcasts or audio or video posted online in that they are normally distributed file-based downloads and not streaming files accessed through a site such as YouTube or a blog. While closely related, podcasts are different from blogs and other

digital media that can be subscribed to with RSS. Podcasts are designed to be delivered when published to the subscriber's computer, mp3 player, phone or other device, whereas most blogs and other digital media are designed to be accessed through their site. Podcasts that have been delivered to a computer, mp3 player, phone or other device can then be listened to or watched "anytime anywhere" without internet access. However, blogs and other digital media a user subscribes to often cannot be accessed without an internet connection. Although the differences are blurring as media technologies advance and as many podcasts have corresponding blog sites, the two key differences of delivery and anytime anywhere access still make podcast distinct.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of podcasting, especially from an educational standpoint, is the time- and location-shifted aspects of the texts. People may listen anytime, anywhere—they are not chained to a specific time or place. Since many podcasts may be listened to on MP3 players or cell phones, there are increased opportunities to listen wherever. Suddenly students may access their texts while driving, running, doing chores, and so on, which increases their opportunities for learning. This is key for nontraditional students who may have additional time constraints.

In this article, I focus on audio podcasts and sometimes video podcasts. I am examining these two types of podcasts because they are the most common. They are also more distinct from other digital media than podcast Word documents or rich text files, which are too similar to the paper texts our students create. In addition, audio and video podcasts are more closely related to each other and to the ancient rhetorical speeches

since the text is, at least in part, spoken. Plus, it is easiest to focus on these two rather than the entire range of distributed media. Discussion of all possible file types is beyond the scope of this article and outside the scope of my experience with podcasts. From this point forward, whenever I say podcast I mean video and audio podcasts specifically.

In this text I discuss two main types of "classroom" podcasts: teacher-produced podcasts and student-produced podcasts. While the terms are fairly self-explanatory, there are a few concepts necessary to explore. In both cases, these are podcasts created for, or as a part of, the class. Teacher-produced podcasts are obviously created by the teacher, possibly in association with others, and are for the students. These may be recordings of lectures, supplemental material, "readings" in podcast form composed by the teacher, and other various podcast texts the teacher created for the students. In the still limited scholarship on podcasts in education, generally the podcasts are of this type—teacher-produced—and are often recorded lectures.

Student-produced podcasts are, not surprisingly, produced by the students and are often course requirements in some ways. These podcasts may be composed by a group of students or a single student and may be informal and barely edited—like a journal entry or daily reading response—or very formal polished texts—like the final written course paper. I focus on this type of podcast in this article, as it is through composing texts, whether written, podcast, or in some other form, that our students learn the most. In addition, there is very little scholarship on student-produced podcasts.

Another type of podcast is externally-produced podcasts, which are not created for the class but by outsiders not associated with the class and for other reasons. These podcasts may be required or recommended texts for the class. One example may be the very popular Grammar Girl podcast, which I require a subscription to in several of my undergraduate courses. These are often good texts in that they are free and the student may access them anytime anywhere with MP3 players and other devices. Also, these work well as examples of various rhetorical concepts like style and arrangement. While these may be strong additions to a writing class, my focus in this article is on student-produced podcasts.

I discuss these three types in more detail in the companion piece to this text, "Podcasting in a writing class? Considering the Possibilities."

As Shankar states on page 375 of "Speaking on Record" [quote] "Words such as writing, speaking, and talking are complex and polysemous, leaving no clear way to describe related—but new—activities" [end quote] . This issue is one I found problematic when discussing podcasts as texts. I found it hard to differentiate between these aural texts and the more traditional visually-accessed texts such as print texts, websites, blogs, wikis, and so on. While these more traditional texts are generally primarily visually accessed, they should not lightly be combined with other types of visually-accessed texts including paintings, photographs, and icons—texts that may not use words primarily or at all to communicate. What is important in these traditional visually-accessed texts and podcast texts is generally the primary form of communication is words, so I needed a

term to differentiate the traditional visually-accessed texts from both the aural text of podcasts and the visual and non word-based texts of images. Thus, I focused on a key element in these more traditional texts—typography—and developed the term typographic-based texts to represent print texts, blogs, websites, wikis, and other visually-accessed texts that use words as a primary means of communication.

This ends my definitions of podcasting, classroom podcast types, and typographic-based texts. Next, I will explain the literature on podcasting in education.

[Musical transition]

Review of the Literature on Podcasting in the Writing Classroom

Since podcasting is so young, only about five years old, it is not surprising there is limited scholarship on the subject and even less on podcasting in education, let alone in writing classrooms. But, the research that does exist provides rationale for the adoption of podcasts in the writing classroom. Various scholars have found several benefits to podcasting, which can be combined into five categories:

- **Higher Achievements:** In two different studies on the use of podcasts of class lectures, researchers found that podcasts resulted in higher student achievements. Belinda Tynan and Stephen Colbran, on pages 831-2, discovered reduced attrition and a [quote] "higher standard of answers in

examinations" [unquote], with the use of podcasts. Dani McKinney, Jennifer Dyck, and Elise Luber found that students who studied with podcasts and related PowerPoint handouts had higher exam scores than students who only attended a lecture with PowerPoint slides.

- **Student Support and Enthusiasm:** Three different studies on teacher-produced podcasts found high levels of student support and enthusiasm for the podcasts. McKinney, Dyck, and Luber, on page 621, determined that 88% of students prefer a podcast of a missed lecture over lecture notes. Similarly, Evan noted that students are more receptive to learning from podcasts than from lectures or textbooks. In the third study, Michael Huntsberger and Alan Stavitsky provided optional and supplemental podcasts of reading overviews for the students and learned that students enthusiastically appreciated these podcasts and 89% of students listened to these podcasts. In fact, 35% of the students listened more than once, which is impressive for optional class material.
- **Time- and Location-Shifted:** The time- and location-shifted option for podcasts is a benefit that researchers in two different studies highlighted. According to Evans, nearly 80% of the students rated the "anytime anywhere" ability as important and 25% of the students took advantage of this and listened to their class podcasts while traveling. Huntsberger and Stavitsky, on page 403, found similar numbers of students taking advantage of this ability—about 30% listened during [quote] "unspecified activities" [quote]—and

students were also excited that they could listen to the podcasts at their own convenience.

- **Student Opinions:** In two studies, students expressed positive opinions on the benefits of podcasts. According to Tynan and Colbran, students think podcasts are valuable to their studies, assist learning, aid exam preparation, and provide flexibility. Evans states on 496 that students think podcasts enhance their learning experience and are more effective revision tools than textbooks or student notes.
- **Community Building and Classroom Experience:** The use of podcasts may also enrich community building and classroom experience according to two studies. Students in Krause' online class thought the podcast-like audio files provided them a classroom-like experience, which was helpful. Tynan and Colbran discovered increased community building in the classes with lecture-based podcasts.

Each of these studies analyzed audio podcasts.

Of course, there are also issues with including podcasts. While the time- and location-shifted option is a benefit, it is not always used. Evans found that 80% of the students he studied listened on their computer and only 20% on MP3 players. So, mobility was not fully utilized by the students, but this did not mean that it was not a benefit for those 20% of students who listen anywhere. In Tynan and Colbran's study, on page 831, students pointed out several other problems including implementation costs, lack of

visuals, delays in availability of the lectures, additional time needed to listen, reduction in lecture attendance, and [quote] "not being able to ask questions," [unquote]. Not being able to ask questions points to a serious concern related to podcasts, especially lecture-style podcasts. This lack of interaction could be a significant determent to many students, especially those struggling with the material. While other forms of interaction may be possible—emails, discussion forums, and even future classes—the lack of an instantaneous answer is problematic. Also, the podcasters does not get the immediate feedback from the audience and cannot adjust the material to fit the audience's immediate needs. So, while many advantages exist, there are also disadvantages to consider.

The majority of these studies occurred outside computer and writing classes or even rhetoric, composition, and technical communication classes. Steven D. Krause conducted one of the few audio/podcast research studies in computers and writing. In a small study of his online writing class, which 11 of his 19 students participated in, he provided supplemental audio files, similar to podcasts. He found students thought the files aided in the study of material, but that some students had issues with the extra time the podcasts took or because they were not audio-based learners. Krause also found that of the 11 students, three did not listen to the supplemental material; four listened to some, and the other four listened to half or more. This matches the research by McKinney, Dyck, and Luber and also Huntsberger and Stavitsky—students will listen to podcast supplemental material. While none of these studies examined other types of

supplemental material, it would be interesting to see if students are more or less likely to access supplemental material in podcast or audio form.

From these studies it appears that podcasts in the classroom may lead to higher scores; high levels of student interest in the material and repeated listening to the podcasts; and a more classroom-like experience for online classes. In addition, students find that that podcasts are valuable to their studies, assist learning, and provide flexibility. However, drawing on these studies, issues like increased time requirements, implementation costs, and a lack of visuals should be considered with podcasts in the classroom.

Although these studies are helpful to those considering incorporating podcasting into their classes, the researchers focus on teacher-produced podcasts that are usually recorded lectures. While it is important to understand how effective and helpful teacher-produced podcasts are, these are not the only types of podcasts computer and writing teachers should consider for their classes. We teach our students how to compose in various media and genres, so we should consider the fit of student-produced podcasts in our classrooms. In the rest of this article, I present how podcasting, especially student-produced podcasts, may help our students rethink well established rhetorical and writing concepts—such as the five canons—and apply them in new ways. I also discuss how the rethinking and new applications may often lead to increased traditional print and digital media writing skills.

[Musical transition]

Rethinking the Old in New Ways

Lemke suggests that [quote] "new information technologies, new communication practices, and new social networks make possible new paradigms for education and learning, and call into question the assumptions on which the old paradigms rest" [quote] (p. 76). Podcasts are calling into question some of the teaching methods and media we use. As more texts become digital texts—from those written on a computer and printed, to those created solely for reading or access online—the need to teach our students methods and skills to write these texts becomes even more vital. Lunsford, among others, has contented on page 170, that we are in "secondary literacy," which is a [quote] "literacy that is both highly inflected by oral forms, structures, and rhythms and highly aware of itself as writing, understood as variously organized and mediated systems of signification"[unquote]. Thus, writing has become more oral. Conversely with digital media, oral texts may become "writing"—with, as Shankar suggests on page 375 the [quote] "essential properties of writing, such as permanence of record, possibilities of editing, indexing, and scanning" [quote]. With this expansion of what we consider writing comes the needs to teach students how to write in these new forms. In addition, Lunsford asserts, on page 170, that [quote] "in this scene of secondary orality and secondary literacy, student writers must be able to think critically and carefully about how to deliver the knowledge they produce" [end quote]. Warnick agrees, arguing on page 332 that [quote] "there will be an increased need in the near future for the work of critics with an understanding of what's under the hood, as electronic texts in time become more complex and immersive" [end quote]. Integrating podcasting into our

classrooms is one such way our students may examine and explore "what is under the hood".

Warnick argues that online discourse [quote] "works through strategic use of argument forms, common topics, conventionalized genres, stylized expression, and other structures suitable for rhetorical criticism and analysis" [quote]. Podcasting, one form of online discourse, certainly incorporates all of these. In fact, podcasting, when done well, should heavily draw on ideas from our ancient rhetorical roots especially in ways typographic-based media cannot. Podcasting provides a medium through which we and our students may rethink these rhetorical roots in new ways. In this section, I first briefly discuss how I have used podcasts in my classes. Then I explore how the rhetorical canon may be reconsidered and reapplied in podcast texts. Next, I discuss the basic writing concepts of audience, purpose, context, tone and voice and how students who podcast tend to develop deeper, richer, more thorough application of these concepts. I include a discussion of how, in my classes, I have found that students are rethinking these concepts and coming to a deeper understanding and they are applying increased skills to other forms of writing.

I have taught podcasting since the fall of 2007. I have included podcasts as an optional or required project in eight classes: five graduate and three undergraduate classes, requiring podcasts in three of the graduate classes and two of the undergraduate. Podcast projects included the Week in Review assignment, where students presented a review of a week of class from discussions to readings and lectures. Another assignment

is the reading response podcast that asked students to podcast their reactions and thoughts on the readings. While never required, some students opted to do their final class projects in podcast form, which ranged from longer audio arguments, to a podcasts series on rhetoric, to a case study with interviews. In the companion piece to this text I discuss some of these assignments. I focus this article mainly on my undergraduate classes, and especially a senior seminar class with a social media theme that had a larger podcasting component; however, I include examples from a wide variety of classes. While some of these podcasts are available online, I did secure the student's permission to use their podcasts and other intellectual property in this text.

The Five Canons

The first of the five canons, invention, is possibly the least changed in podcasting from the older traditional methods. According to Aristotle, invention is [quote] "discovering the best available means of persuasion" [quote]. Invention deals with "what" to say, not "how" to say it. The "what" may vary due to media, but not as much as the "how". The question of *topio*, or common places, comes into play with invention. Of the common topics, testimony may work particularly well with podcasting, as the podcast may literally include others' testimony—by recording and integrating them into the podcast. The testimony is even more meaningful in the voice of the person giving the testimony. This adds both ethos and pathos to the testimony and thus to the text. In previous media, especially print texts and speeches, the testimony would only be quotes, which are helpful but not as persuasive as the actual voice or image of the speaker giving the

testimony. Likewise, including the spoken words of witnesses or authorities will make the argument stronger and more reliable and trustworthy. Maxims or proverbs may be included, either spoken by the podcaster or incorporated from sites like LibriVox, which provides free public-domain text recorded by volunteers. Incorporating maxims or proverbs from LibriVox in another voice may provide additional ethos and impacts later canons like delivery. In addition, resources like LibriVox may offer maxims and proverbs the modern day student may not know about, thus expanding their possibilities. So, while the "what" of invention may not change much for podcasting, additional variety of the "what" may be offered through inclusion of the real voices of the witnesses and authorities, and by other voices delivering the proverbs and maxims. While this incorporates more of the "how" into invention, it may also encourage students to think about the "what" in new ways.

One of the bigger changes from print papers, most typographic-based texts, and even ancient rhetorical speeches, is that podcasters may include music in their recordings. While music plays into arrangement, style, and delivery, the inclusion of music begins with invention. The student composer must decide if music fits into the "what" of her argument. If she thinks the music will help with the persuasiveness of her message, then she will later consider the style of music that best works; the arrangement of the music, perhaps as an introduction, bed music the background music while speaking, transitions; and finally the delivery of the music. The possibilities of music add to the list of tools the podcaster may use when deciding what to say.

In my own classes, students have included interviews, quotes by famous people, proverbs, music, and maxims. These "whats" of the argument were often wise rhetorical decisions many of which are much less common (and even impossible) in the other media students used for projects. Many of my students took the opportunity to think beyond the standards of the typographic-based texts they were used to composing and were very inventive with the "what" of their podcast arguments. Here is one example of a student, Brett Jones, drawing a maxim from LibriVox:

[clips from podcasts]

Arrangement is the second canon to consider and reconsider with podcasting. Arrangement, the order of discourse, is impacted by the media of podcasting, as media and genre generally impact arrangement. The first thing to consider is whether podcasting is a genre and if there are subgenres. Since podcasting is so young, this may be hard to fully determine, but this is a good issue to bring up with students. Class discussions on podcasting as a genre often seem clearer to students than the analysis of print genres. Many podcasts are quite different from other audio texts, such as radio shows and certainly different from text in non-audio forms, such as blog posts, memos, emails, and so on. In addition, there is such a variety of podcasts and podcast types that this may lead to some interesting discussions as to what counts as a genre, media, and category. Walch and Lafferty list 18 podcast genres, with the last genre "other genres". The 18 include educational, gaming, music, news, politics, couple casts, comedy, religious and spiritual, called "godcasts", and interviews. While many of these have

genre specific aspects such as content, arrangement, and other features that allow them to be categorized, many podcasts integrate components that may be found in a variety of these podcast genres. In addition, listening to an assortment of podcasts, especially from a variety of these categories, students may analyze an array of arrangement methods. They may consider the commonalties of arrangement in their chosen categories, but also can consider what works well in other categories and why the differences exist. For example, should they include

- **Pre-intro:** episode specific information such as date and episode title to let the listener know which episode she is listening to before she invests more time in the episode and in case she does not have access to a screen to see this information
- **Intro:** an approximately 45 second introduction to get listeners hooked and introduce the topic
- **Outro:** the closing information which often includes email addresses, website url, creative commons license information, closing saying, source and transcript information, and so on

Students who consider and reconsider the canon of arrangement in writing podcasts have some of the same arrangement issues as the typical text, such as which point to put first, second, third, and the genre conventions. But podcasting offers other arrangements considerations. Deciding whether to include music may be more of an invention area, but where to include it is an arrangement concern. Should they start

with music? Have musical transitions? End with music? Put music after the title segment? These additional arrangement considerations seem to also make the students more aware of traditional arrangement considerations and often results in a more thoughtful arrangement of their podcasting texts. In addition, students seem to take this awareness and deeper consideration of arrangement to texts in other media, resulting in improved arrangement skills.

While students may easily relate the third canon, style, in podcasting back to rhetoric's roots, style is one of the more difficult concepts for many of my students to grasp with written texts. Style has, at times during the history of rhetoric, only been considered "simple ornamentation" and many students first see it this way and not as the deeper, artful expression of ideas appropriate to one's purpose. Many of my students attempt writing in an "academic" style—with big words sometimes selected through Microsoft Word's thesaurus, long sentences, and a passive voice—which results in something that is not fun to write, read, or grade. However, the question of how it will be said becomes quite literal when the students are speaking their texts. Suddenly the spoken text issues of style such as dictation, accents, jargon, word choices, expression, and speed come into play. As both pathos and ethos are key when considering style, students begin to think about how an accent may give them pathos but decrease ethos, or vice versa (or even increase or decrease both). They consider how jargon may give them ethos with some audiences and decrease it with others. As their audience is no longer just the instructor, and possibly because they hear how ridiculous their academic written style sounds when spoken, students reconsider style in new and interesting ways. While this is often done

more subtly, I've had two obvious examples of style choices among my student podcasts. Both my examples involve the artful use of accents. The first is a more serious use. A graduate student created a podcast critiquing the web design of Sint Maarten websites. As a native of Sint Maarten, the Dutch southern half of the island of Saint Martin/Sint Maarten, she used her native dialect for the podcast, which was quite different than the "normal American" dialect she used in class. This use of her native dialect and accent gives her podcast additional ethos, especially with her Sint Maarten audience. Here is a short example of her podcast.

[clips from podcasts]

My second example is two undergraduates in a senior seminar. For this class, pairs of students were given one week during the semester and had to create a "week in review" podcast covering their week. Their audience was mainly the class, but they knew these would also be posted on iTunes University afterward. The style one pair, Brett Jones and Arch Woodard, applied for their week in review was Pirate. They spoke like pirates, renamed everyone in the class with pirate names and gave us positions on the "Good Ship Kairos", and made several pirate references, while discussing what we covered that week, which was arrangement and style. They certainly applied a style that was not traditionally academic, yet they successfully met the assignment goals and created what was probably the favorite week in review podcast among their classmates. It was certainly one of the most memorable. This is a short example of their podcast and how they integrated Pirate with rhetoric.

[clips from podcasts]

With both these examples, their strong style choices would not have been clear, or perhaps even noticeable, in a written text. Because they were podcasting they could play with diction and accents in ways writing print texts does not allow. In both cases they made complex style decisions for their purpose and strengthened their arguments because of this. Both podcasts would have been fine without the accents and dialect, but these reinforce the text immensely and connect to the audience through ethos and pathos. By making extreme style choices in these texts, these three students opened up their style choices in their writing. By allowing and encouraging different, even radically different styles, we may allow our students to play with and, not coincidentally, learn about style in ways the written academic argument does not easily allow. In both my examples I did nothing to encourage these radical styles, and only in the undergraduate class did we specifically discuss style. These styles came about through the students' own rhetorical decision making process. I plan to use these as examples in future classes to see how other students consider and reconsider style after listening to some of the effective options used previously.

Memory is one of the canons that has been often forgotten, ignored, or deemphasized with print rhetoric. In composing print arguments, the rhetorician has less of a need for memory aids to deliver the argument or to develop improvisational skills and a treasury of *topio* to pull from improvisational circumstances. These skills are important for speeches and spoken improvisational arguments, but composition and rhetoric has

pulled away from these types of argument with typographically-based arguments. With the focus on typographically-based arguments memory was considered the recall of *topoi* drawing on *kairos* and grounded in audience and circumstances. Regardless, memory was clearly defined and developed for spoken arguments. As podcasting brings back the spoken aspects of argument, memory once again applies and in more of the classical ways. The type of podcast most clearly related to the ancient spoken arguments is the unscripted podcast. For these podcasts the rhetorician may draw on the same memory aids to recall a memorized speech or, if the podcast is not memorized, may need to draw on improvisational skills and the *topio* treasury.

A scripted podcast may still delve more into memory than we see with print arguments. Even when scripted the podcaster may opt to go off script as something new may occur to her, possibly from some kairotic consideration or some *topoi* she did not consider when scripting. As a podcaster, I know I do this at times. Even when composing a script, the podcaster may find considerations of *kairos*, audience, and circumstances more obvious and applicable. As podcasts have a shorter production process than many print texts (in part because they do not need to go through gatekeepers), kairotic choices may not only make more sense but may be necessary to keep the podcast up-to-date. The students in my senior seminar class were more likely to mention current events—including the presidential election that occurred that semester—in their podcasts than in any other writing they composed that semester, except possibly their twice weekly reading responses. They would draw on the debates, speeches, and other current and often political events for examples, to not only give their arguments ethos, but also to

connect to their audience—who they knew was also watching and listening to the same events.

Most of my student podcasters created scripted podcasts, which drew on their *topio* treasury and the occasional improvisation, but did not requite memorization or large amounts of improvisation. However, in the senior seminar class they had three podcast reading responses, which were more causal, often off the cuff, and part of their twice-a-week reading response requirement. For these responses, students often pulled from their topio treasury, using comparisons, relationships, circumstances, and testimony. Interestingly, there was less of these *topio* in their print reading responses.

Through the use of podcasting, both scripted and unscripted (but especially unscripted), students may work with the canon of memory in more classical and often richer methods than with a print argument. In my classes, students seem to value this canon or at least understand it in more complex ways.

The final canon, delivery, applies to podcasting in both traditional and new ways. Delivery is, of course, how something is said—the public publication and presentation of discourse including the production of the argument with effective gestures, tone, words, movement, and images. Obviously the performance aspects of delivery such as gestures, voice modulation, and articulation are not easily applied to print texts and thus some aspects of delivery have been omitted or only briefly covered in print-based rhetorical texts and training. However, podcasting brings back some of these aspects. In audio podcasts many of the techniques of vocal delivery are again applicable. Voice

modulation, sound levels and articulation are important considerations in audio podcasting. In video podcasting these aspects of delivery are also important, along with gestures.

However, these classical oral delivery methods are not the only delivery methods applicable to podcasting. The delivery methods developed for print, web, and other typographic-based texts may also be appropriate in audio or video podcasting. Delivery of typographic-based texts includes the "look" of the text. Paper choices, background colors, typography choices and visuals all impact the look and feel of a typographic-based text. As many podcasts have scripts, show notes, or other typographic-based texts associated with the episodes, the authors of these texts should draw on the same design and visual presentation methods developed for other typographic-based texts. In addition, many podcasts have websites and associated digital "places" for the podcasts, which should also drawn on design and delivery considerations developed for digital visually-accessed texts.

So, the effective delivery of an audio or visual podcast should consider the classical rhetorical speech methods, along with typographic-based texts methods. A good podcast should be delivered in a way that draws on and remediates the delivery of various media before it. But, podcasting also bring with it additional considerations for delivery. The visuals of typographic-based texts may show up in the traditional places—with the transcripts or websites, but also can be a part of the podcast files, included as album art and visuals within more advanced podcasts. Slides or pictures that change at particular

intervals during the podcast is an example. As one student, Ryan Rice put it [quote] "compared to other types of electronic writing and publishing, I think podcast[s] actually allows the creator to do more in terms of presentation." [quote]

Editing is another delivery related concern. With typographic-based texts, editing is important, however editing for a podcast is a bit different. Sound editing, for example, includes editing out verbal tics, adding or removing pauses and silences, making words louder or quieter, fixing poorly pronounced words, editing for time and size, and more. Sometimes the edits may change poorly delivered aspects such as articulation and voice modulation, thus improving the final delivery of the text, and in ways not possible with the classic rhetorical speeches.

In my own classes and personally, I've found that podcasters tend to understand their speaking quirks after an edit or two of their own recorded voice. In some cases the podcasters become better speakers as they work to remove the issues they spend a lot of time editing out of their podcasts. I am much more aware of my "ummm" verbal tic and have begun working on my speaking to remove this. I use my "umms" as an example in class and have had several students come to me with similar examples they find in their own speaking including "ahs" and "likes" and other issues such as speaking speeds. Thus, it seems, podcast editing may lead to better delivered podcasts, and enable podcasters to understand their own speaking issues and work to improve them, thus leading to better spoken texts overall.

One final area of delivery consideration podcasters have that are not normally part of typographic-based texts or speeches is music. The classic rhetoricians, for example, did not have or use music to set the tone. Music also draws on invention, arrangement, and style considerations, and certainly adds to the final delivered product and the overall performance of the podcast. Music may be used to connect episodes of a podcast with a theme song, for transitions within the text, as examples, to set a tone, as background to add layers and auditory interest, and for other delivery-based considerations.

My students have used music in a variety of interesting ways to improve delivery. One student used music from a friend's band to link his three reading response podcasts together, creating interesting consistency more common among professional podcasts while providing free advertising for a friend. Several students used music for transitions between parts of their podcasts. The students who produced the previously mentioned pirate podcast included beatboxing a form of vocal percussion, which did not fit the pirate theme, but was used to wrap up the podcast and draw student interest. One student, Ashley Judge, created a series of podcasts called *Rhetorina* and she used music in ways that greatly increased the effectiveness of the performance of her podcast. She was a ballerina with a local company and her series was about rhetoric in a Grammar Girl style. The beginning of each podcast had a different musical composition related to ballet, which built ethos for the name of her podcast, provided an "ear-catching" opening to her podcast, and set the tone for each piece. Here are some examples of students using music, including a small bit of the music in the *Rhetorina* podcast. These illustrate how the tone is set and the ethos and pathos may be impacted.

This transcript has not been edited. Please see *Kairos* for the edited version.

[clips from podcasts]

My students who podcast tended to consider and reconsider the five rhetorical canons in both ancient and new ways. Delivery, style, and memory in podcasts have strong similarities to the delivery, style, and memory of the ancient Greek rhetoricians as they both are spoken forms. Thus, many of the key points Aristotle and others made about spoken rhetoric may be applied by students to their podcasts, permitting a more thorough understanding of these three canons than the students had when applying the canons to print texts. In addition, each of these canons may be applied in new ways—drawing on the benefits of the media—such as the inclusions of music and new ways of delivery. Invention and arrangement also may be applied in both new and ancient ways—from the use of testimony in the voice of the speaker and the arrangement of the various genres of podcasts. Students seemed to better grasp and understand the five canons when they applied them to podcasting. They used creative methods to make their podcasts richer and more effective rhetorical texts. But my students did not stop with the podcasts. They tended to later apply their deeper understanding of the canons to other texts, from the more traditional print texts; to websites, blogs, and other digital media; and to speeches and oral presentations.

[Musical transition]

Other Writing Skills: Audience, Purpose, Context, and Tone

Beyond the five canons of rhetoric, I have found incorporating podcasting, especially student-produced podcasts, into the writing classroom leads to increased writing skills in other key areas: audience, purpose, context, and tone. In traditional academic writing, many students seem to struggle with the concept of audience. They often write for their real audience—the teacher—but have trouble envisioning and writing for other audiences. However, I have found with podcasting, students consider their audience in ways that are both richer and deeper than what I tend to see in typographic-based texts. As with the other new media like blogs and websites, students have a real audience—they post it online and other people might actually read it. Podcasting seems to lead to further attention to audience. For many students, it seems their voice makes it more personal and increases their investment. Since these are their words from their mouths, the students appear to care more about how they sound to their audience. I have had students speak in slang during a presentation to their peers but work to remove slang from their podcasts with the same audiences. Perhaps because of the increased personal nature of the text for students, they tend to better visualize and consider their audience. Audience analyses I have received for podcast assignments tend to be much more developed than for print texts. Interestingly, they then apply this depth of analysis to their writing in other media. Their audience analyses of texts written after their podcasts are richer, deeper and more thorough.

Students who create podcasts seem to become more aware of their purpose. For some of them the purpose moves beyond "just another paper I have to write". One student, Robert Manfredi, stated this nicely in a reflection: [quote] "I tried to imagine, while writing, that I was talking to someone and not writing a paper that may increase my own stature in the eyes of my teacher" [quote]. This same student saw the podcast as having a broader audience beyond the teacher and because of this states the [quote] "purpose changes because of the change in audience" [unquote]. The students also found they may portray their purpose, among other things, in "more" ways. For example, one student, Angela Johnson stated [quote] "The podcast is stronger because I get to use more than just words: I have tone, inflection, delivery, and sound" [end quote]. In addition, music, word choice, speed, pauses and more may be used to better match their purpose with tone and other aspects of writing. Like the richer audience analyses that students developed for first their podcasts and then later writing, the richer purpose they considered for their podcasts was then applied to later work—podcasts or other writing. Thus, in both cases it seems that once students began applying these concepts more deeply in one medium, they brought these new skills and considerations to their future writing, regardless of media. My podcasting students became stronger writers in print and other media because of what they learned while podcasting.

The next writing skill, context, is often one I find students spend little time on. This makes sense. Often the context of the true reader of their work—me, their teacher—is not going to greatly impact their text. Most likely I will be reading it at a desk or similar location with decent lighting and relatively minimal distractions. Students also have a

good grasp of my context as reader—at least from general personality and interests, and occasionally my pet peeves. While my technical communications students who create manuals may play a bit more with context, often there are not enough differences in context from most of their other school writing for students to need to make many, if any, alterations. This changes significantly with podcasting. While my students may know where I listen to podcasts, the variety of contexts—driving, exercising, doing chores, sitting at my computer—complicates their understanding of my context. We also discuss where they and their audiences may listen to podcasts. The physical context of their audience—time, location, environment, distractions—may vary tremendously and students grasp this concept quickly and easily. In fact, in some cases, as this student, Tiana Clark, discusses, they see the variable context as an advantage:

> [quote] I think the thing that makes podcasting an argument so great is the feeling of comfort. I felt like the person listening to my podcast could either be in their car on the way to work or simply in the bathtub. This made me feel at ease, I felt that those things alone could help me connect to the people that I am making the podcast for. [end quote]

As this student points out, the varying context helps them feel like they are connecting more to their audience—despite or maybe even because of the distractions. Students also seem to think more about other aspects of context—such as the educational level and background of the listeners. Students especially seem to consider language choices based on their audience's context. Podcasts seem more personal to many listeners

because the speaker is there, in their ears and head, in a way the writer of a print text is not. For this student and others, the personal nature of the podcast texts seems to work in coordination with context to make the podcasting media an advantageous choice for them.

The final area of writing I am discussing here is tone. For many of my students tone becomes a much more meaningful writing consideration and technique. While students writing typographic-based texts need to consider how they will express themselves for their audience to correctly interpret the text, these typographic text authors have only a limited scope of tone tools to utilize. They have word choice, flow, sentence density, language complexity and other word-based areas to draw from. In some cases they have some visual choices that they may use to support a tone—such as typography, color, visual arrangement, and so on. With podcasting, the student's tone toolkit is expanded. They have the same word-based and visuals-based choices, but they now have auditory choices—from sound levels, diction, vocal tone, to music and silences. With these expanded tools, tone becomes a bigger consideration and in many ways a more powerful technique for the writers. Since students use their own voice to set tone, this makes it more personal to them and literally connects tone with voice—both to their speaking voice and to their voice within the text. As one student, Ian Cho, put it [quote] "tone and style become shockingly personal on the podcast level" [quote]. While voice and tone have strong connections in any text, these connections become more obvious to many writers. While students may see a variety of audiences for their print-based texts, many tend to get caught up in the academic tone they use for their teachers. The students

know that the teachers are often their only real audience, and the ones who grade them, and we should not be surprised when they write for their teachers. With a podcast, where students are literally speaking to their audience, they seem to be able to move away from the academic tone. Ian Cho discusses this issue in his reflection on composing for a print-based argument and podcast-based argument:

> [quote] The main difference between the paper and the podcast was the tone. For the paper, I used the academic, argumentative tone. Cool, collected, and even-headed. There were no real embellishments or a distinct sense of voice. I found it hard to fully detach myself from the academic voice when writing the paper argument, and so it comes across as dry and rather boring. The podcast, on the other hand, was more personal, more in depth. I found it easier to cite examples and explain them better. The starkest difference was that I found that first-person was pertinent to the podcast medium. Since you are physically talking into a microphone, to a listening audience, I deemed the tone should be more conversational, more personal, less academic, less dry, and injected a bit more personality into it. [unquote]

So, as with audience, purpose, and context, students seem to be able to consider and apply tone more thoroughly and deeply when composing a podcast text. As Cho in the quotation above points out, they appear to more easily move beyond the academic tone, audience, purpose, and context, to something more appropriate and the result is a stronger argument.

As with the five canons, students consider and reconsider these four writing skills, audience, purpose, context, and tone, in deeper ways while podcasting. They often take them beyond what they apply in their typographic-based texts and think about these concepts in new and exciting ways—new for them and exciting for the students, and also for us, their listeners and teachers. Like with the five canons, students take their deeper understandings and applications of these concepts to their other writing—print texts and digital texts alike—often becoming stronger writers because of their work with podcasts.

[Musical transition]

Discussion and Conclusion

Shanker, on page 375, argues that [quote] "some of what has been achieved through reading and writing can be achieved in the oral and aural domains" [quote]. This statement is only part of what may be achieved in the oral and aural domains. As I contend here, what may be achieved in the oral and aural domains cannot always easily be achieved through more traditional writing, but once achieved, students may and often do apply it to other forms of writing and become better writers in a variety of media.

Obviously as teachers of writing, improved writing is a key goal in our classes. As I have discussed here, incorporating audio and video podcasts, especially student-produced podcasts, may improve student writing. However, another goal for many of our classes

is to prepare students for life after their degrees. Podcasts may be helpful here too. Through working with podcasts students may develop skills they need to be citizens of our digital world. As Lemke argues on page 79, we need to teach [quote] "informatic literacies…. necessary skills of our future literacies, those we will all need" [quote]. Not teaching our students these skills could lead to a world where, as Lemke also states on 79, [quote] "future citizens will be as disempowered as those who today cannot write, read, or use a library". [end quote]

Not only may integrating podcasting improve our students' informatic literacies, but podcasting skills may also lead to vital job skills. Many businesses and organizations now have podcasts, including 19% of fortune 500 companies and 21% of other business groups according to Nora Ganim Barnes and Eric Mattson. In an earlier study by Barnes and Mattson, they found 26% of the 200 largest charitable organizations in the United States are podcasting. They also found 79% are video blogging, a term that is not clearly defined in this study, but may be video podcasts. These numbers appear to be increasing with time. Thus, there is an increasing need for people to have the skills for podcasting. Some of these companies and organizations have people whose sole job is to podcast. Who are these company employed podcasters? What is their training? As teachers of computers and writing, we are perfectly situated to educate the next generation of podcasters. Our students who are trained in writing, rhetoric, argument, composition, audience, tone, and so on are ideal candidates for these positions, as long as we also teach them the skills to podcast. While I mostly focused on podcasting from an educational perspective, it is important to understand that teaching our students

podcasting may better prepare them for career opportunities, such as being the Podcaster for fortune 500 company X or non-profit Y.

As Lemke contends on page 77, [quote] "The generic literacies of the Information Age will certainly include multimedia authoring skills, multimedia critical analysis, cyberspace exploration strategies, and cyberspace navigations skills" [quote]. Podcasting is yet another digital media we should consider teaching in the computers and writing classroom. Not only is this an area our students may need to know to succeed in the business world, but by learning to audio and video podcast, students may improve their other writing skills in traditional print and other digital media areas. To podcast effectively, students must reconsider the traditional rhetorical canons and other writing concepts in new, richer, and deeper ways. Since podcasting is often an oral and audible form, the five canons, developed for speeches, apply in both traditional and new ways, giving students a stronger grasp on what the canons mean and how to apply them. Due to the personal nature of podcasts, students literally consider their voice and tone, while still considering voice and tone in more traditionally written ways. The combination results in a more thorough understanding of these two concepts. By incorporating audio and video podcasts into the computers and writing classroom, we are better preparing our students for jobs working with podcasting and other digital media, and also providing them a way to reconsider and reapply traditional writing concepts in deeper, more effective ways. Our students who podcast may become better writers of all types of texts, from print to Web 3.0 and beyond.

This transcript has not been edited. Please see *Kairos* for the edited version.

This concludes this podcast article. I do hope you check out the companion piece, also published in *Kairos*, where I discuss digital divide and technological literacy concerns with podcasts, provide a more detailed discussion of the podcast types, offer some possible podcast assignments, and provide a quick tip for teachers incorporating podcasting. The companion piece, "Podcasting in a writing class? Considering the Possibilities," is available at: http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/praxis/bowie.

The full transcript of this article with full reference information and links is available at: http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/16.2/topoi/bowie and also in the show notes. All student samples in this podcast were used with full permission. The music used in this podcast is "6" off *Ghosts I* by Nine Inch Nails, which is available under an Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike Creative Commons License.

[Music fadeout]

Student Podcast Clips:

These clips are listed on order based on the topic and start time for the clips.

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- 26:15: Jones, Brett. (2008). A Progymnasmodcast, for ENGL 4320:005:FA08, posted 12/1/08 on iTunes University.
- 32:19: Hinds, Makeisha. (2009). "Episode 1" *Sint Maarten: Access Denied, a View and Critique of Sint Maarten's Web Design*. For English 8121 May 2009.
- 33:42: Woodard, Arch, & Jones, Brett. (2008). "Week in Review Pirate Cast," for ENGL 4320:005:FA08, posted 10/15/08 on iTunes University.
- 45:04:
    - Woodard, Arch, & Jones, Brett. (2008). "Week in Review Pirate Cast," for ENGL 4320:005:FA08, posted 10/15/08 on iTunes University.
    - Judge, Ashley. (2008). "WIR: Judge," for ENGL 4320:005:FA08, posted 11/19/08 on iTunes University.
    - Manfredi, Robert. (2008). "Robert Manfredi Reading Response 1" for ENGL 4320:005:FA08, posted 9/03/2008 on iTunes University.
    - Judge, Ashley. (2008). "Rhetorina Episode Two: Ethos" *Rhetorina*, for ENGL 4320:005:FA08 , posted 11/30/08 on iTunes University.

Links in the Transcript:

- *Grammar Girl* podcast: http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/
- *LibriVox*: http://librivox.org/

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- *Rhetorina*, a rhetoric student podcast: http://deimos3.apple.com/WebObjects/Core.woa/Browse/gsu.edu.2124884021.02124884032.2173554180?i=1925357101 (One sample Rhetorina podcast)

Album Art

Album art designed by Jennifer L. Bowie. Images:

- Ruhsam, William. (2008). "AKG Perception 220 Microphone." Posted 8/17/2008 on Flickr: http://www.flickr.com/photos/bruhsam/3031270525/ with an Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 2.0 Generic Creative Commons License.
- Brassey, Anna a. (1878-83). Illustration from *A Voyage in the Sunbeam, our Home on the Ocean for Eleven Months*. Image is in the public domain. Artist may not be Brassey, but no other information was available. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anna_Brassey_438-victorian-woman-writing-jornal.gif

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