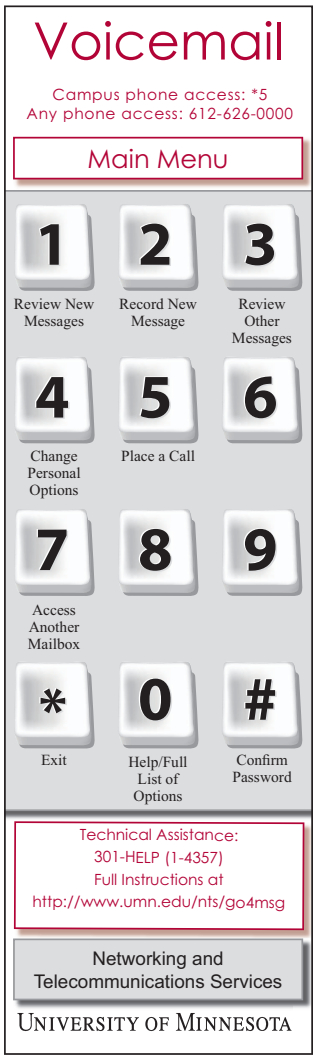
University of Minnesota

Office of Information Technology

What's Inside | OIT | May 2006 Newsletter

Information Technology

Gopher Messaging Bookmark



Good-bye

After ten years it's time to move on

The first issue of the *Information Technology Newsletter* was published in April 1996. Since then the Office of Information Technology has used the newsletter to deliver articles, announcements, and reminders to help you with your learning, teaching, research, and administrative activities. One of our goals has always been to help you make wiser decisions about using information technology and resources.

Looking through the archive of the newsletter's pages gives you a glimpse of important issues over the last ten years. Today we're delivering much more information via OIT's web pages and to subscribers of specialized mailing lists. It's time for a change in how we deliver the newsletter's information technology related news to you. We're moving from paper delivery to online and e-mail delivery, making this the newsletter's last printed issue.

We're continuing the *UMart* newsprint publication; it includes articles such as "A New Approach to Voicemail," reprinted in this issue of the newsletter. Those who have subscribed to the newsletter's e-mail list will get brief, monthly e-mail updates, alerting them to the featured topics in *UMart* and pointing them to online information about important news and resources.

Soon the featured articles in *UMart* will be available on the web; you'll find printed copies in news stands around campus.

Those who have already subscribed to oitnews-l, the newsletter's old e-mail list, are automatically on the new mailing list. Those who only receive the paper copy can subscribe to the mailing list; subscription information is online in the newsletter's *Subscribe* section: http://www.umn.edu/oit/newsletter.

Mary Kelleher, OIT newsletter editor

New Approach to Voicemail

By Josh Welsh, reprinted from the April 2006 **UMart**

Answering machines used to be fairly simple devices. Someone called your phone, and if you didn't answer, the machine picked up and recorded whatever the caller had to say. After you listened to the messages on the tape, the machine would rewind and the whole beautiful cycle would begin again — kind of like spring, only without the hay fever, right?

But this system had its drawbacks, especially for people who really wanted to stay connected with their callers. One such person was Gordon Mathews, the inventor of voicemail (not to be confused with Gordon Mathew Sumner, better known as the singer Sting). In the 1970s, Gordon Mathews the inventor became frustrated with the phone tag that he was playing during a business trip, and he realized that he wanted an answering machine that could act more like the e-mail programs that we have come to know and love. He wanted to be able to reply to messages and forward them to other people in his office. He realized that such a system would require a centralized computer to keep track of all the users and their messages, and he set about inventing that system. A few years later, Mathews's company, VMX, sold the first commercial voicemail system right here in Minnesota to 3M. In the 1990s, the University of Minnesota bought its first voicemail system from VMX, as well.

One of the big differences between a simple answering machine and voicemail is that a voicemail system makes use of a centralized computer server, rather than individual machines distributed at each user's phone. In the decades since Mathews's invention, voicemail servers and systems have gotten smaller and more elaborate, but like almost every other computer, they eventually need to be replaced.

The same holds true for the University of Minnesota's voicemail system. The current system has already outlasted its expected five-year life span, and the vendor doesn't support it anymore. Therefore, Networking and Telecommunications Services (NTS) has been working to install a replacement system.

The new system, known as Gopher Messaging, goes well beyond what the old one could do. It makes use of unified messaging technology, which means that you can listen to your messages online (much like a Web-based e-mail account), and if you are checking messages over the phone, the system will convert any text messages you have into speech.

If you'd rather have your voicemails sent to your favorite e-mail account, you can do that too —you can even turn this feature on and off with a few clicks of a mouse. Or you can set the system to play different greetings based on the phone number of the person calling.

On the other hand, maybe you use faxes to communicate with the world. Gopher Messaging can handle that, too. You can receive faxes in your Gopher Messaging inbox and view them on your computer.

You can also set up your account with "find-me-follow-me" numbers. So, for example, if you don't pick up the phone at your desk, the system can try to find you first on your lab phone and then on your cell phone. You can also set up "find-me-follow-me" profiles, which will treat important business calls different than family calls, for example.

In fact, the new system has so many features that NTS has teamed up with the University Technology and Training Center (UTTC) to create free training seminars for those who are interested. To register for an in-person or Web-based short course go to http://uttc.umn.edu/training/. The live online format enables you to participate in the seminar from the comfort of your own desk. You can ask questions, download course materials, and even chat with the rest of the class.

On the other hand, if this all sounds like more technology than you really feel like dealing with, just to check your messages, never fear. Users are more than welcome to check their messages over the phone. For information and user guides see http://www.umn.edu/nts/go4msg/.

Look for the current **UMart** newsprint publication in news stands around campus. Links to feature articles will soon be available online. To visit the UMart website, go to http://umart.umn.edu/.

Podcasting: An Emerging Technology with Potential

Each month, the Digital Media Center (DMC) publishes a "Spotlight Issues" article on our web site about a current technology-enhanced learning (TEL) issue highlighted at sessions of the TEL Seminar Series, in our classes, or at our program or project meetings. This month's article is below.

While faculty and staff members at the University of Minnesota have only begun to explore the educational potential of podcasting, over the past several months this new medium has generated tremendous interest all over campus. Why is this? Perhaps this is in part because the iPod and iTunes have already become integrated into students' lives. It's easy to imagine that sometime in the near future, when students check their iTunes first thing every morning they will find a mix of downloaded music, podcasts they listen to for entertainment, and a variety of educational podcasts generated by their instructors, departments, and the University. A student might find a recorded lecture from one class, feedback from an instructor about a paper, and for yet another class a preview of the day's readings from fellow students. On other days he or she might find updates from his or her department or school, or an interview of a guest speaker who will make an appearance later that day in class. No time to listen to all the podcasts? No problem: the podcasts can be downloaded to any MP3 player and listened to on the bus, while standing in line, or while walking across campus (Campbell 2005).

Perhaps podcasting also has appeal because of its origins as an alternative to mass media such as radio. Podcasting was not developed by media professionals, but by ordinary people who were interested in creating programming more specifically tailored to their own interests and tastes and to those of their audiences, both real and potential. While the word "podcasting" is a portmanteau of "iPod" and "broadcasting," no iPod is needed — one can listen to podcasts on any MP3 player or even a computer. While Apple created the iPod and offers software useful for podcasting such as iTunes and Garageband, the advent of podcasting pre-dates the podcasting capabilities now built into the Apple software. One significant development for podcasting was the creation of RSS, or "Really Simple Syndication," a web feed format that makes it easy to publish, distribute, and subscribe to podcasts.

Now that podcasting has caught on, mainstream media outlets offer their own podcasts. That both mass media and individuals with a little tech savvy are now producing podcasts suggests a range of possibilities. Anyone with a microphone, a laptop, and some inexpensive software can produce a podcast of decent quality, while with more elaborate equipment and media production expertise one can produce a podcast of professional quality. Podcasting lends itself equally well to quick feedback from an instructor in response to reports submitted by students, or to the development of a series on newsworthy research at the University that can be distributed to alumni and archived.

One of the more common uses of podcasting is to record lectures and make them available to students enrolled in a course. This form of podcasting, sometimes referred to as "coursecasting," is a logical extension of the age-old practice of student-made tape recordings of class lectures. Coursecasting offers the added convenience of portability — no more bulky recorders and audiotapes-and "push" technology that enables students to subscribe to a coursecast and automatically receive new recordings in "podcatchers" such as iTunes. While coursecasting is valuable for purposes of review, instructors should also consider the distinctive features of podcasting when they think about educational uses of this medium beyond providing recordings of lectures. Because podcasting is a mobile medium, instructors can create learning experiences for their students in spaces outside the boundaries of the classroom. A student's experience of a museum tour or other field trip can be guided and shaped by an educational podcast. Short instruction modules can be useful for internships and other fieldwork. The possibilities of podcasting in education are tremendous so long as they are grounded in sound pedagogical principles and an understanding of the ways in which people are already making creative use of this new medium.

Bibliography

The following readings may help you use podcasting for teaching and learning.

■ Balas, Janet. "Blogging is So Last Year: Now Podcasting is Hot." Computers in Libraries. 25, no. 10 (2005): 29–32.

This article provides a brief introduction to podcasting from a librarian who is enthusiastic about its possibilities yet also wary of jumping on yet another technology bandwagon. She concludes that libraries are already making good use of the medium, and provides a good list of resources for people who are interested in finding some examples to listen to for themselves.

■ Bull, Michael. "No Dead Air! The iPod and the Culture of Mobile Listening." Leisure Studies. 24, no.4 (2005): 343–355.

While this article does not discuss podcasting as such, Bull's study of iPod users provides insight on how people have integrated the iPod into their everyday lives. As a mobile medium, the iPod helps users take more control over noisy, often chaotic urban environments and create individualized soundscapes. This article provides some food for thought for instructors interested in creating mobile learning experiences for their students.

■ Cochrane, Todd. Podcasting: The Do-It-Yourself Guide. Indianapolis: Wiley, 2005.

This book was the first devoted to podcasting and provides an excellent overview of podcasting in plain language, from subscribing to creation to publishing. While the book provides a good introduction to options in software and equipment, budding podcasters might want to supplement the information by consulting more up-to-date information that is available online. The author also publishes a blog at http://www.geeknewscentral.com.

■ Duke University Information Science + Information Studies Program. "Duke University Podcasting Symposium." Durham, N.C.: September 25–27, 2005. http://www.isis.duke.edu/events/podcasting/.

Duke University, which handed out iPods to every incoming freshman in 2004 as part of the Duke iPod First Year Experience, also sponsored the first academic symposium devoted to podcasting. The symposium focused on the ways in which podcasting is shaped by business, law, journalism, and Internet culture. Archived Webcasts are available on the web site.

■ Gardner, Campbell. "There's Something in the Air: Podcasting in Education." EDUCAUSE Review 40, no. 6 (November/December 2005): 32–47. http://www.educause.edu/er/erm05/erm0561.asp.

In this wonderfully descriptive article, Campbell speculates on the future of podcasting in higher education. The author argues that the power of podcasting lies not in the convenience of this mobile medium, but in the impact of the "explaining voice." As Campbell puts it, "Consciousness is most persuasively and intimately communicated via voice."

■ Wikipedia, s.v. "Podcasting." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcasting (accessed 20 April 2006).

The Wikipedia entry on podcasting provides an excellent overview of the origins of podcasting and how it works, and an extensive list of resources.

Campus Resources

The following campus services and sources may help you further explore podcasting.

- University of Minnesota faculty and staff members and students can easily publish podcasts through their UThink blogs; see http://blog.lib.umn.edu/archives/001261.html. To set up your UThink blog, see http://blog.lib.umn.edu.
- Our consultants can advise you on best uses for podcasts in the classroom. See http://dmc.umn.edu/consultations/.
- Our video producers provide fee-based audio production services. See http://dmc.umn.edu/video/.
- Several of this year's TEL Grant Program winners are working on projects that involve educational uses of podcasting. See their proposals at http://dmc.umn.edu/grants/2006/awards06.shtml.
- See our Podcasting in Education guide at http://dmc.umn.edu/etf/podcasting.pdf.

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