



Podcasting and The Legal Field

Courtney David Mills

IPA Technology Director and Litigation Paralegal with Hoover Hull LLP

With the exception of reading this article, Podcasting is perhaps the coolest thing you can be doing with your time right now. According to a recent national survey by the *Student Monitor* of undergraduate college students, listening to iPods has become “more in” than drinking beer or any other college pastime. During the 18 years of the survey, drinking beer has been rated as the No. 1 coolest thing to do with two (2) notable exceptions, in 1997 with “the internet”, and in 2006 with “listening to your iPod.” This article will discuss Podcasting and its impact on the legal field.

Podcasts are often misunderstood amongst the general public. Basically, podcasts are audio files available for downloading over the internet. The files are typically encoded in the .mp3 file format (a high quality very compressed audio file format). What makes podcasting unique is that the mp3 files are incorporated into a RSS feed (see article in *June 2006 Precedent* for more information regarding RSS feeds). The RSS feed enables a person to subscribe to a podcast and receive updated audio files with a few clicks of the mouse. A person can download a free program from the internet, i.e. iTunes, that will organize and track of the user’s podcasts. Most media outlets have podcast subscriptions available on most major news shows, i.e. NBC’s *Meet the Press* or CBS’ *60 Minutes* are available as podcasts. Since podcasts are cleverly disguised RSS feeds, the updated files are delivered to your computer, thus saving the need to search the internet for new audio files.

Another misconception about podcasting is that you need a portable music player (“PMP”) to take advantage of the service. This is not the case. Although many people purchase PMPs such as an iPods in order to listen to their podcasts on-the-go, many others listen to the podcasts on their PC. In fact, I have found that I spend far more time listening to my podcasts on my home PC than on my PMP.

Podcasting has been steadily growing in its popularity an application in recent years. A growing number of colleges professors are now including lectures recorded as podcasts in the curriculum at most major universities. Legal Podcasts (a.k.a. Plawdcasts) have also been growing recent years. The *Legal Talk Network* offers a weekly Plawdcast on different legal issues, i.e. electronic discovery or discussion of recent Supreme Court decisions. Plawdcasts typically resemble a radio talkshow or a roundtable discussion with experts on particular legal issues. Some larger lawfirms are also creating podcasts as a marketing tool. The ABA has also created a Plawdcast library of its CLE seminars, several of which are available for free through their website.

Please visit IPA’s Technology Section page for more information and links to Plawdcast subscriptions and software.