Module 6: Podcasts
Webinar Series Review
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By Rhys Drout, Student Technology Fellow for the Museum Learning Hub, a cross-regional collaboration to provide free capacity-building training and resources, funded by a National Leadership Grant for Museums from IMLS.

For those interested in understanding how to use website and social media analytics and data to understand their audiences, I recommend Module 6 on the Museum Learning Hub.

This series of webinars taught me how museums can use podcasts to effectively tell stories and inspire the public on a broader scale. For example, in the introductory session, Joe Williams talked about how the Plains Art Museum utilizes its "Five Plain Questions" podcast to truly give people a voice, especially for groups who have traditionally been underrepresented. Podcasts are a great way of disseminating information and providing long-form content in a format that is easily accessible by everyone. Therefore, information can be far-reaching, inspirational and educational. He also stressed that podcasting is something an organization can do with even a small budget, but to remember that it is still a labor of love - there is preparation as well as post-production that goes into making a podcast successful. Amanda Kay Gustin also highlighted the importance of developing your mission through storytelling in podcasting. The ability to deliver this message was explained in excellent detail throughout the three technical workshop sessions, which came together to give a detailed explanation of how to start a podcast. Below are some of my key takeaways:

Technical Workshop 1: Introduction to Podcasting for Museums by Hannah Hethmon, Owner/Executive Producer, Better Lemon Creative Audio

- **About Podcasts:** Hannah explained that a podcast is a free radio show that is delivered on demand over the Internet using RSS technology, which is important because it can be distributed across multiple platforms – something that increases access which is one of the best things about the medium.

- **Fun fact:** 41% of US adults listen to podcasts, and the number 1 reason they do is to learn things which is very conducive to museums. So, podcasts are a great way to continue engagement with museum guests who may not attend your museum every week, they also can go deeper than exhibitions go, can help curate content like oral histories and you give your audience when it is convenient for them. In terms of technical reasons, podcasts have a low-tech barrier to entry, and it is much easier to make professionally and easier to edit.

- **Planning Strategy:** You need to decide on your mission, your budget, how much time you can commit, how many episodes you want to make etc.

- **Storytelling:** Hannah reminded us that stories and narratives are more entertaining than facts! A formula that can be used to get information across is: *I am doing a story about X, the topic, and what is interesting about it is Y.*

- Marketing: Remember to spend time coming up with an interesting title, cover art, and description, a homepage of some sort, social media and transcripts. In other words, make it easy to find and listen to your show, and when people see it make it appealing!

Overall, Hannah made sure to note that podcasts are not usually viral but are a slow steady build – so trust the process!

Technical Workshop 2: [Episode Planning, Writing, and Recording Your Podcast](), once again hosted by [Hannah Hethmon.]()

- **Planning:** Brainstorm a ton of ideas, then sketch out possible approaches for each topic, then assess what is interesting about each topic and which stories you want to pull out – basically what is the big idea?

- **Guests:** If you are planning on having guests, decide on a list of potential guests from either inside or outside your organization. Hannah pointed out the importance of including varying perspectives and voices.

- **Interview Questions:** To plan questions, you should focus on your guests' background as well as the big idea you are discussing – also brainstorm possible follow-up questions.

- **Episode Length:** think about when you want your listener to engage! Hannah gave the example of planning to be a part of a commute, which is typically 20-30 minutes long.

- **Scripts:** When writing a script, Hannah said that you can either keep it as simple as planning an intro, outro and transitions. Her biggest tip was to make sure that you write how you speak, breaking up the prose so it flows well when read out loud.

- **Recording Pro Tip:** always wear headphones when recording and avoid echoey spaces!

Most importantly, make sure to be an active listener when interviewing a guest – take the time to process what the other person is saying and really engage with them instead of just planning your next move – it will really come across on recording!

Technical Workshop 3: [Podcast Editing and Collaborative Production Models,](#) also hosted by [Hannah Hethmon.](#)

- **Audio Editing:** Hannah taught us that there are two broad approaches to editing audio: either cutting down the story or building up the story. Building up the story is useful if you have more complex narrative elements. Breaking down is crucial if you maybe have a long-form interview between two people. Use online tools to help you get an initial transcript and then go back in and do the fine tuning of coughs, breathing, pauses, etc.

- **Meaning:** One of Hannah's important points was that you want to make it easy to listen to your podcast without altering the meaning or the natural voice of the speaker. Changing the meaning of what they're saying is an "unethical edit."

- **Music and Sound Effects:** The general rule about music is less is more – just use a little of something that adds ambiance and emotion. And be aware! You need to pay for sound effects. Pay attention to copyrights and licensing requirements. You could also have it made specially for you by a creator in your community!

- **Outsourcing:** it is possible to hire producers, editors - when you have more money than time this is a good idea.

Here are some equipment, software programs, and resources that Hannah recommended for producing your next podcast:

- **Podcast recording equipment and software:**
  - Mobile recording equipment:
    - [Zoom H4N Pro Handy Recorder](#), XLR cable, shotgun mic, [RODE reporter mic](#), [Movo HM M2](#).
    - OR you can just record on your smartphone: use the [RODE reporter app](#), [Shure MV 88 mic](#).
  - Studio set-up:
    - Use a laptop with recording software like [Audacity](#), [Hindenburg](#), [GarageBand](#) and then plug in a USB mic. [RODE NT-USB mini](#), [Audio Technica ATR 2100](#), [Samsung Q2U](#).
    - Top of the line set up: [RODEcaster Pro](#) is built in with everything you need.
  - Remote: You can either use [Zoom](#) but make sure you are recording separate audio tracks, or pay for [Squadcast](#). It is also smart to make a different recording on a separate device.
- **Editing:** [Auphonic](#), which is a website that will essentially do all of your sound engineering for you for a very low price
- **Transcripts:** [TEMI](#), [Rev](#) or [Otter.ai](#)
- **Sound Effects and Music:** [Soundstripe](#) or [Epidemic Sound](#)
- **Digital Audio Workstations/Podcast Editing:**
  - [Audacity](#): Pros: free open-source editing platform and has a huge community. Cons: it is more or less destructive, so when you delete audio it is basically gone.
  - [GarageBand](#): free if you have a Mac, good for layering and editing audio tracks.
  - [Hindenburg Journalist](#): This is Hannah's favorite - it is a nondestructive editing software that was built for speech so it is very intuitive, but it needs to be purchased.

- o [Descript](): platform designed to edit text, vocals, edit narrative stories – really good for putting your organizing your story and putting it together. It is very useful for visualization when you have lots of different audio/interviews that you are building into a cohesive story.
- **Podcast Trailers:** To make a trailer for your podcast, you can use a free tool called [headliner.app]() which allows you to upload an audio clip and turn it into a social media video which you can use to market your podcast.
- **RSS Code:**
  - o To create the RSS code, when you record a podcast, you can use a podcast hosting provider like [blubrry](), [libsyn](), [Spreaker]() or [Buzzsprout]() to create the code that is then pushed out.
  - o Once it is on the hosting provider, grab your RSS feed which is a URL from the hosting service distribution section and submit it to Apple Podcast via [podcastsconnect.apple.com](). You can also use the service's distribution option to push it out to Google, Spotify, etc.
- To track your progress, [libsyn]() can show you your downloads per episode after 30 days.
- A great way to find all the links for different platforms your show is on is [Pod.link]().