

INSPIRATION REPORT

PODCASTING @ SCCLD

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OVERVIEW

This report urges bringing podcasting to the Santa Clara County Library District (SCCLD) in order to increase our online presence and open the gateway for infinite learning, play using tech, and many more possibilities.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a library system, it's important to look at the trends and think of fresh ideas to connect with our patrons. An example of this is implementing a district-wide podcast that will allow for patron input of what they would like to hear. A successful podcast can lead to many more library users through our promoting and word-of-mouth. There are pros and cons to this method, but this report will describe the **immeasurable benefits and opportunities** a podcast can provide for our libraries and, more importantly, our communities.

INTRODUCTION

The popularity of podcasts is rising rapidly and it's important for libraries to stay with the trends. According to Statista (2024), "close to 70 million people listened to podcasts in 2023. This number is projected to rise even further, reaching over **110 million** listeners by 2029." Podcasts are easily accessible and can be listened to while doing chores or driving. They are ideal for teens and adults, but the library can include information relevant for kids and parents as well.

Our online presence is lacking and starting a podcast is a recurring project we can add that can increase the number of people who hear about the library. We have a Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube all with minimal usage and updates. A podcast is a great way to offer information through a different method. Some people don't have the time to watch a YouTube video and the other social media services only allow for pictures or brief sentences that are easy to scroll by and miss.

The podcast can be used to give book recommendations, talk about local events, and promote upcoming programs (both in-person and virtual) the library is hosting. There is also an opportunity to include "hot topics" or current events with an aim to help our community become more informed citizens. The important part is **listening to the community** to see what they want. This podcast will lead us to becoming a more hyperlinked library.

"THE RESPONSE TO ONGOING CHANGE SHOULD BE CONSTANT AND PURPOSEFUL – BASED ON THOUGHTFUL PLANNING AND GROUNDED IN THE MISSION OF LIBRARIES. HYPERLINKED LIBRARY SERVICES ARE BORN FROM CAREFUL TREND-SPOTTING, AN APPLICATION OF THE FOUNDATIONAL TENETS OF LIBRARIANSHIP AND AN INFORMED UNDERSTANDING OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES' SOCIETAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT"

(STEPHENS, 2011)

KEY TERMS

DYNAMIC MICROPHONE	A less sensitive microphone that does not need its own power source. It is most popular among podcasters. Because they are less sensitive, they also have a lower risk of peaking or clipping throughout the audio.
POP FILTER	A device placed between your mouth and the microphone to help reduce plosives (i.e. popping of sounds of P's and B's).
DAW	Digital Audio Workstation. Simply put, this is your editing software of choice to mix your podcasts. Some commonly used DAW are Audacity, Adobe Audition, or Reaper.
LIVE STREAMING	Live streaming refers to the broadcasting of a real-time, live video podcast to an audience over the internet.
SUBSCRIBE	When your audience subscribes to your podcast, they will receive the newest edition (episode) of your show as soon as it is available.

(Robles, S., 2023)

PODCAST ORIGINS

- 2004 - Adam Curry and Dave Winer are credited with inventing the medium
- 2005 - Apple iTunes 4.9 is released, fully supportive of podcasts
- 2005 - George Bush becomes first President to deliver his weekly address in the form of a podcast
- 2005 - Podcast is declared "word of the year" by the New Oxford American Dictionary
- 2006 - Steve Jobs demonstrates how to record a podcast using Garageband during a keynote speech
- 2007 - Ricky Gervais sets world record for most downloaded podcast with an average 250,000 downloads per episode in the first month
- 2009 - 2011 - Andrew Carolla's podcast receives 59,574,843 unique downloads
- 2013 - Personal Audio sues high profile podcasters, claiming they have a patent on podcasting
- 2013 - Apple announces 1 billion podcast subscribers
- 2017 - Court rules against Personal Audio, declaring they did not invent the medium of podcasting and could therefore not claim royalties
- 2019 - 165 million people have listened to a podcast, with 90 million Americans listening monthly.

(One Fine Play, n.d.)

Starting from it's humble beginnings in 2004, podcast usage is only expected to continue rising.

PROS AND CONS

PROS:

- More library visibility
- Deeper connection with the community and opportunity for more library trust
- High growth potential to make this into something bigger
- Available globally

CONS:

- Staff time, both to learn how to make a podcast and ability to teach other users
- High start-up cost for hardware and software
- Hard to successfully stand out in a saturated market

IMPLEMENTATION

To begin, we must purchase the following hardware. High-end is not necessary, but we do want the equipment to last as long as possible with relatively high usage.

- Dynamic microphone
- Computer
- Headphones
- Mixer
- Pop filter (if budget allows)

The next step is picking out a DAW/software. [Audacity](#) is a good, free option and easy to use. [Reaper](#) is another option if Audacity doesn't work out.

Then, we create a name and artwork for the podcast. The name should be catchy (for example, **the County Lit Life**) and the artwork creative.

We then pick a hosting site, such as [Podbean](#).

(NI Business Info, n.d.)

While there are many ways to go with the podcast, I suggest starting with getting to know the library staff. This shouldn't be limited to just the librarians, but circulation staff as well. Anyone who is comfortable with it, can give an interesting fact about them and give a brief synopsis of their favorite book. The goal would be to show the personality of the library staff and make people more comfortable using the library and asking for help.

Engagement should be a priority for us. We want people to continue listening on a regular basis, so including polls, a comments section, and other engaging elements will be important. The polls can be fun book-related questions, such as "would you rather live in Narnia or Hogwarts?", and useful polls with

sample topics where listeners can choose what they want to hear. Transcripts of each episode will help with accessibility for the hearing impaired.

Promotion of the podcast can happen in the libraries and on our other social media accounts. We can create flyers to post and include it in our online newsletter, as well as promote it in person at the reference desk and during programs.

There is **room for growth** with this project. After testing out the equipment to create our own podcast for a few months, we can open up the podcast room to library users. They may book the room and try out the equipment themselves. This would require extra staff or volunteer time to learn how to use the equipment and to have someone available to teach patrons how to use it, when needed. As far as the library podcast, there is infinite room for growth when it comes to topics. Depending on demand and popularity, live streaming is another possible option.

EXAMPLES

For further ideas of implementation, we can look at examples of other libraries that have podcasts.

[Los Gatos Library - The Page Turner](#)

A local highlight. The Page Turner is a podcast where library staff discuss their favorite books. There are 33 episodes so far.

[Syosset Public Library - Turn the Page](#)

The Syosset Library has interviews with authors. With many years and 297 episodes worth of podcast experience, this library is a great resource.

[The Ferndale Library - A Little Too Quiet](#)

This podcast also has author interviews, as well as other community and library talk. There is a particularly interesting episode where librarians from a few different libraries discuss libraries as a “third space”.

[Edmonton Public Library - Overdue Finds](#)

This podcast has many fun episodes about pop culture. Implementing some of their ideas would bring life to our podcast. Some of their exciting episode examples are “Best and Worst Book Endings”, “Top 5 Favourite Pop Culture Families”, and “Top 5 Road Trip Songs”. This shows that library podcasts don’t have to JUST be about books.



Photo by [Michi S](#) from [Pixabay](#)

CONCLUSION

Public libraries need to be looking at the trends and using them to the library's advantage. Podcasts allow for a new level of engagement with the community and can take away some of the library anxiety people may have. Our four priorities as mentioned in our strategic plan are **welcome, listen, inspire, and innovate** (Santa Clara County Library District, n.d.). Starting a podcast and opening up that technology for library users to explore hits all four of those priorities. Making the podcast personal and engaging shows that we **welcome** the community to our buildings. By adding polls and allowing comments, we are **listening** to the community. Lastly, by adding learning and play opportunities with the hardware and software, we are **inspiring** and **innovating**. This can be a wonderful opportunity for both staff and library users.

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PICTURES

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