

QinetiQ <http://www.qinetiq.com>

QinetiQ, the defence technology and security company, has sold the 1901 England and Wales Census website to Friends Reunited for just over £3.3 million. This key online resource for genealogists was built by digitising and indexing original census documents in a PFI project between QinetiQ and the National Archives, and achieved over 120 million hits and processed over 12 million paid downloads from users researching their family trees since its launch in January 2002 on the National Archives website. The census will enhance Genes Reunited, the genealogy arm of the highly successful Friends Reunited online service that helps people contact people they went to school with.

Internet

Podcasting and Libraries

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Podcasting has definitely been one of the hot topics since the Spring, so I thought I'd take a further look into it – what potential does it have for library services?

There was a spell when practically every programme on Radio 4 was broadcasting a piece about the wonders of podcasting – so what is it exactly? The simplest definition is that it is an audio broadcast that is made available over the Internet, usually on a regular basis, primarily as MP3 files. These 'streams' are available by subscription and are then downloaded onto a MP3 player, such as an iPod. For a comprehensive definition of podcasting look in wikipedia³. Podcasting is also known as 'syndicated audio content'; 'audio blogging' is its cousin.

While podcasting was a relatively new phenomenon it initially attracted attention from bloggers, but latterly its potential is being explored in different contexts. Perhaps the reason the BBC reports on podcasting so frequently is that it is running a download and podcast trial⁴ from May to December 2005 that allows listeners to download individual programmes and/or to subscribe to particular programme feeds as podcasts. Figures

³ *Podcasting* [Online] (2005) Florida: Wikipedia. Available at:
<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcasting>>
[Accessed 24 August 2005]

⁴ *BBC Radio: download and podcast trail* [Online] (2005) London: BBC. Available at:
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/downloadtrial/>>
[Accessed 24 August 2005]

about the podcasts have not yet been made available, but there were 1,369,893 download requests for live performances of Beethoven's complete symphonies that were offered as part of BBC Radio 3's The Beethoven Experience⁵. There are 16 programmes from across the whole BBC radio network offered as part of the trial, including the World Service's 'Go Digital', programmes in Persian and Gaelic, as well as 'From Our Own Correspondent' and the 8.10am interview from the Today programme.

An area where this technology could be applied is in the field of education. Duke University, NC, USA has recently announced a trial partnership with Public Radio International to provide public radio reports as digital audio files for use in Duke courses⁶. This pilot programme will run from September to December 2005, the radio programmes will be delivered over the Internet in a streaming format; others as downloadable MP3 files. Issues such as fee structures, licensing agreements and delivery mechanisms will be assessed after the results of the pilot.

This work builds on the University's experience in a 2004-5 \$500,000 initiative to encourage creative uses of technology in education and campus life, when hundreds of iPods were distributed to first-year students and academics. The results were wide-ranging – the ability to record audio generated the highest levels of interest, whether it was recording lectures and tutorials, or as a field recording tool; reflective listening for language and music students was also welcomed. Duke University found that the initiative encouraged discussions amongst staff and students about the role of technology in teaching, as well as generating significant publicity leading to the possibility of future collaborations with content providers and other institutions.⁷

⁵ *Beethoven downloads top one million: press release, 21.07.2005* [Online] (2005) London: BBC. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2005/07_july/21/beethoven.shtml > [Accessed 23 August 2005]

⁶ *Duke University partners with Public Radio International to provide radio reports for class: Duke University press release, 10.08.2005* [Online] (2005) Durham, NC: Duke University. Available at: http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/2005/08/pri_partnership.html > [Accessed 23 August 2005]

⁷ Duke University. (2005) iPod first year experience: final evaluation report [Online]. Available at http://cit.duke.edu/pdf/ipod_initiative_04_05.pdf > [Accessed 20 August 2005]

Musselburgh Grammar School in East Lothian, Scotland is the first school in the UK to be producing regular podcasts⁸, and was short-listed for a *New Statesman* New Media Award, in the Community and Information category^{9,10}, and since their academic year has already started, there is new content available.

So, how is the library community embracing this new development? Most of the activity seems to be originating from the U.S. There is a list for the use of podcasting technologies in libraries, the bibliocasting listserv (bibliocasting@listserv.syr.edu) is dedicated to discussion of streaming media in the library environment¹¹. I have subscribed to this list and traffic is very sporadic. One librarian who is using podcasts as part of his blog is Greg Schwartz, at OpenStacks¹². While they have a certain 'homemade' quality to them, the content was interesting as a window into the issues affecting U.S. public libraries. Another stream of library orientated podcasts comes from OPAL: Online Programming for All Libraries¹³, a collaborative effort by libraries of all types to provide cooperative web-based programming and training for library users and library staff members, administered by a group of library services in Illinois. I was unable to subscribe to the podcast feed¹⁴ but did listen to one of their broadcasts. It was reminiscent of listening to tele-conference, but does show what experiments are being made.

⁸ *Mgsonline*. [Homepage of Musselburgh Grammar School] [Online] (2005) Available at: <http://www.mgsonline.org.uk/> > [Accessed 20 August 2005]

⁹ *InfoZone*. [Online] (2005) Available at: <http://www.mgsonline.org.uk/infozone.htm> > [Accessed 20 August 2005]

¹⁰ Grammar School website nominated for the New Statesman New Media Awards 2005 for Education and Innovation. [Online] (2005) Available at: <http://www.mgsonline.org.uk/infozone/nmapressrelease.htm> > [Accessed 20 August 2005]

¹¹ Johnston, A. (28 April 2005) New e-mail list on podcasting in libraries. *Spoken word matters* [Online] (2005) Available at [http://laramie.gcal.ac.uk:8081/spokenwordmatters/discuss/msgReader\\$97](http://laramie.gcal.ac.uk:8081/spokenwordmatters/discuss/msgReader$97) > [Accessed 20 August 2005]

¹² *Open Stacks*. [Homepage of Greg Schwartz] [Online] (2005) Available at: <http://openstacks.net/os/> > [Accessed 20 August 2005]

¹³ *OPAL: Online Programming for All Libraries*. [Homepage of OPAL: Online Programming for All Libraries] [Online] (2005) Available at: <http://www.opal-online.org/> > [Accessed 20 August 2005]

¹⁴ *OPAL podcast*. [Homepage of OPAL podcasts] [Online] (2005) Available at: <http://feeds.feedburner.com/OpalPodcast> > [Accessed 20 August 2005]

I found two pieces about the possible uses of podcasting in libraries¹⁵¹⁶, written by Michael Stephens, a librarian, technology trainer and author living in Northern Indiana. The first is a great overview piece, pulling together thoughts and comments from a variety of sources, and the second looks at how libraries are using MP3 technologies.

A final few thoughts, whilst podcasting appears to be a great way to distribute audio content, it is, in many ways a passive medium. It is difficult to search for audio content, although Dogpile does have an audio search feature but Google doesn't seem to. It is also very difficult, if not impossible to annotate, comment on or save samples from podcasts. No doubt all these things will change over time – another challenge for the techies behind the search engines! My next column will be a look at e-audio in libraries.

Try it for yourself!

If you are interested in trying this out for yourself, then I would recommend that you start with the BBC site as it contains clear explanations of the various steps you need to take to be able to listen to podcasts. To do all this you will need a piece of software to manage your podcast subscriptions called a Podcast Client or iPodder, I use RSS Radio¹⁷ (because Doppler doesn't work with the BBC podcasts) which seems to work well and interfaces with iTunes, Windows Media Player and iRiver Media Center.

Of course, you'll have to then download the podcasts onto your MP3 player. So like so many technologies this is not exactly the most streamlined process in the world, but worth persevering with.

If you are interested in seeing what else is available in the wider world then online podcast aggregator sites such as <http://www.podcast.net> allow you to choose from their lists of podcasts ones you may wish to subscribe to.

¹⁵ Stephens, M. (3 March 2005) TTW on podcasting. *Tame The Web: Libraries and Technology* [Online] Available at: <<http://www.tametheweb.com/ttwblog/archives/001033.html>> [Accessed 20 August 2005]

¹⁶ Stephens, M. (23 February 2005) Libraries doing cool things with iPods. In *Tame The Web: Libraries and Technology* [Online] Available at: <<http://www.tametheweb.com/ttwblog/archives/000977.html>> [Accessed 20 August 2005]

¹⁷ A download that is free for up to 5 subscribed feeds and \$15/€12 for a full licence, available at <<http://dorada.co.uk>>

Further Reading

Tony Hammond, Timo Hannay, and Ben Lund. (2004) The Role of RSS in Science Publishing. Syndication and Annotation on the Web. *D-Lib Magazine*. 10(12) [online] Available at <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/december04/hammond/12hammond.html> [Accessed 20 August 2005]

Intranets

Getting to Eureka!

Martin White

The last few years have seen many organizations investing in content management software to support web sites and in particular intranets. One of the motivations for this has been the vision of everyone in the organization being able to contribute to an intranet, though in reality this is rarely achieved, and in fact is probably not a desirable state of affairs. CMS applications are good at getting content into a repository, and at first glance look to be the way in which content can also be retrieved. Looking at the feature list of most CMS products there is usually a reference to 'powerful retrieval functionality', and in many cases this will be based on the Verity or Convera search suites.

Notice carefully the word 'based'! Many organizations make the assumption that in buying a particular CMS product they are also buying an enterprise search engine. However this is not the case. The search functionality in a CMS is there solely to enable authors to find content in the CMS repository so that it can be re-purposed. This content is in HTML/XML formats and so usually the CMS search functionality does not even allow for the searching of content in related Word and pdf files, though that does vary from vendor to vendor. Certainly the license will only cover the searching of content on the web server, and even then only for internal purposes.

From the perspective of a user they just want to find information, no matter on what server or application. Their requirement is for 'enterprise search' and that is where there is going to be a lot of interesting developments over the next 12–18 months. If you are not an information professional used to the search functionality of a service like Factiva then your expectations of search are based around Google. I've lost count of the number of times I've heard senior managers say that all they want is Google on their intranet. That is indeed possible, and I'll come back to Google later.