Abstract: Podcasting technology has been increasingly used in education. University of Houston is one of the pioneer schools in adopting podcasting technology in instructional delivery. Since the pilot project started in 2005, research studies have been conducted for several consecutive semesters. Each survey result indicated that almost half of the surveyed students did not use podcasts for their learning. They had equal opportunity as other classmates, but they did not take advantage of this new technology. This session will share with audiences the research findings why they did not use podcasts. We will also discuss the possible solutions to providing assistance to students in using this technology to address their learning needs.

Introduction

Podcasting technology has been used to address student’s dynamic learning needs. The research studies conducted at the University of Houston indicate that the top reasons that students use podcasts in their courses are flexibility, mobility and ease of use. This delivery method also has positive impact on student learning effectiveness. It help them retain course content information, help them understand content better by reviewing it after class, and mostly importantly, they enjoyed learning more via using podcasting technology. But why half of the surveyed students did not take advantage of this technology. This session will present the latest study results from spring of 2007.

Discussion topics are formulated around the following eight reasons provided by students why they did not use podcasts for their learning as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1. The reasons for students who did not use podcasts
1. I do not have an access to an iPod / a MP3 player.
2. I am not used to access course materials on an iPod / a MP3 player.
3. I do not like to access course materials via an iPod / a MP3 player.
4. Experienced technical problems
5. Didn’t have enough time
6. Poorly produced quality
7. Poorly delivered quality
8. Didn’t have enough storage space to download materials

Discussion topics

Discussion topic #1: If this new instructional delivery method will change student learning style? Since the top reason for not using podcasts is students are not used to access course materials on an iPod or a MP3 players. Should instructor force them or create interesting podcasts to engage them?

Discussion topic #2: How to educate students who have little or no knowledge about podcasting technology and iTunes functionality? The second reason proposed by students non-users is they do not have an access to an iPod / a MP3 player. They associate podcasts with iPod or MP3 players. Our research data indicate that over 60% of podcast users prefer using computer to portable devices to access podcasting content material. Obviously, delivery media is less an issue than podcasting knowledge dissemination. How can instructor be more creative in podcasting production and incorporate training as part of the delivery content?

Discussion topic #3: One of the top reasons reported by the podcast users is that they can access course content materials anywhere and anytime even when they are involved in other activities. While non-users reported that they did not have time to access podcasting materials. Are they missing something here? How can we show them, with examples, testimonials, or via student group activity?