

In 2006, using internal funding from my university, I began a project to create video podcasts which would supplement my honors Greek Mythology class. I naively believed that I could, in one summer, create enough podcasts to fill a semester. In reality, I discovered that podcasts are both labor-intensive and expensive to create. For a polished podcast, one must write a script, record and edit the sound, identify suitable images in the public domain, combine sound and image, and maintain a website for downloading. Using the technology available at the time, the production of one minute of podcast took approximately one hour of labor. My team of one graduate student (responsible for content), one undergraduate (responsible for technology), and myself were able to create only eleven podcasts in six months. In spite of the expense, I was very pleased with the outcome: the podcasts strongly enhanced the class, where they provided background and supplementary material for the students who were reading diligently through classical texts. The podcasts did not substitute for class time, reading, or writing assignments, but provided additional material in a new and stimulating medium.

The reality of teaching Classics often makes technology projects a risky endeavor; in this paper I will survey the potential pitfalls of podcasting. When I offered the same class a year later, it was cancelled for insufficient enrollment, leaving me with an archive of expensive podcasts and no students to view them. The podcasts are available on a public website on one of my university's servers, but they do not come up in a Google search and so are invisible to the world. Now that I teach a section of mythology with 75 students, I cannot provide them with iPods, and so I can only suggest that they view the podcasts.

Podcasts, by their nature, are made for sharing, and in the second half of my paper I will suggest that classicists could create a new mode of outreach by sharing classical podcasts with the public as well as with colleagues teaching at other schools and universities. In one sense, this would justify the amount of time and money that goes into the production of podcasts by providing a much larger audience. Perhaps more importantly, a peer-reviewed podcast archive would provide high-quality classics-oriented material for students and the general public, something that is sorely lacking on the web.

Podcasts have the potential to bring much of what classicists do behind the closed doors of classrooms, conference rooms, and dusty journals to a public that is increasingly interested in the ancient world. The time to develop high-quality classics podcasts is now.

URL: <http://podcast.fltc.wayne.edu/weblog/jennifer/>