MEMORANDUM

TO: Professor Caleb James

FROM: Rhonda L. Thomas

DATE: April 26, 2018

SUBJECT: Play Project: Feasibility of Podcasting as a Composing Technology

Professor James: You asked that I identify and research a composing technology that might help me in my writing, either on my job or elsewhere. Included in this memorandum are results of an exploration into podcasting as such a composing technology. I would appreciate any feedback you can offer.

Please contact me if you have any questions. You can reach me by email at rlthomas@ualr.edu.

Play Project

A Report on the Feasibility of Podcasting as a Composing Technology

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What I really want to do for a living, beyond anything else, is write and publish my own work. Is podcasting for me? Will it help me as a writer?

Introduction [↑]

This memorandum details, in a light-hearted fashion, the results of an exploration to discover whether podcasting is a feasible composing technology for the work that I do.

My current 'tude[1] towards this tech [↑]

As I understand it, podcasting is a spinoff of blogging. In some ways, podcasting *is* blogging – *audiodigimagically*. The way I see it (through my rose-colored glasses), podcasts are about listening. And for me, there's something magical about listening to someone's voice that isn't present in text and video. Like reading, listening demands imagination (and fortunately, the imagination is perfect). But, unlike reading, there is an immediate closeness and intrigue that is present as I listen to a voice on the defining end of a digital signal. How romantic.

Okay, so I love writing. I love creative writing. I love songwriting. I love storytelling. I love music. I love technical writing. I love explaining processes and *things*. I love music recording. I love sound recording. I love playing around with audio. So, what's not to love about podcasting? It sounds like the perfect partner.

Podcasting for romantics [↑]

Off the top of my head, rose-coloreds perched on my nose, there are a few potential ways I think I can apply podcasting to what I do. Here are my favorites:

- Explaining things (e.g., how to build a pond in an afternoon)
- Serializing a novel (or the memoir I've wanted to write for the past ten years)
- Creating a weekly podcast that mirrors a weekly blog post (to reach a wider audience)
- Storytelling (the world is my oyster).

On the surface, I think podcasting sounds like such big fun; but, as I often say to myself, just because you can do something doesn't mean you should. Feet on the ground, rose-colored glasses off, I need to look at this composing technology in the cold, hard light of day (although it is 2:49AM in the morning). I need to keep in the forefront of my thoughts that what I really want to do for a living, beyond anything else, is write and publish my own work. Is podcasting for me? Will it help me as a writer? Will I BE MULTIMODAL? Let's unpack this podcasting thing and find out.

What's really involved? [↑]

According to Tee Morris, author of Podcasting For Dummies, podcasting is "the automatic delivery of media (audio, video, PDF, etc.) using RSS feeds" (TeeMorris.com). Like I said, *audiodigimagically*. Well, not exactly. A speedy scan of the dummy book and a few other online

and offline resources make it pretty clear that podcasting requires an array of equipment, gadgets, tools, and *skills*: So, in many ways, podcasting is nothing like blogging.

I created a list of the hardware, software, and skills mentioned most often in said speedy scan and compared it to the hardware, software, and skills I already have (See 'Gear, Tech, and Skills Inventory' below). I was surprised to find that I have most of the gear and tech needed to get started with this composing technology. For example, I have a nice field recorder, an okay desk mic, and audio interface software that came with my field recorder. Because of my background in music (and a wee bit in radio), I also think I have enough of the required skills that I wouldn't be starting completely from scratch.

Affordances and limitations [⬆]

From a romantic point of view, creating a recording for a podcast can be as simple as capturing sound or spoken word on a mobile device, editing the audio, sticking on some ID3 tags, uploading the sound file to a server, hooking up some RSS, and Bob's-your-uncle. Realistically, these things are never so simple.

A key element that has not yet been addressed in this analysis is the time commitment involved in podcasting. And the time involved in creating a podcast could be a real limitation to using this technology for composing purposes. The only way to remedy the time issue is to ace the mechanics of podcasting; that way I can focus on the I-want-to-write-and-publish-my-own-work side of it and crank out the actually podcast in a timely fashion. So, with practice, I think it's completely doable. However, the bottom line is, I have to *really* enjoy podcasting to make it a feasible composing technology.

So, what do I think? Is podcasting for me? [⬆]

I think podcasting could be a useful composing technology to learn. I think in the process of learning about and practicing this technology, I would develop as a writer – or at least, podcasting might complement how I develop as a writer. For certain, this technology would challenge me to invent original content. It would create opportunities for me to practice copyediting and proofreading my work. I would get practice at presenting ideas and explaining processes. I would also get practice at writing with concision. For example, if I were to explain how to use a particular technology or software application on a podcast, I would first have to draft my explanation *in writing*. I would then have to revise the explanation until, when spoken, it was of a specified length of time. The podcasting platform would demand an explanation that was concise, clear, and to the point.

I don't see any major limitations in using podcasting as a composing technology other than the time commitment involved. I just need to make the time to learn the mechanics and ace the technologies. So, again, what's not to love about podcasting?

Gear, Tech, and Skills Inventory [⬆]

HARDWARE [NOTES]	
☒ Field recorder	[Zoom H4n →]
☒ Microphone (desk)	[Yeti →]
☒ Headphones	[They are in *sad* shape. I really need new headphones.]

SOFTWARE [NOTES]	
☒ Digital Audio Workstation (DAW)	[Adobe Audition →]
☒ Steinberg Cubase LE 5	[Required by Zoom H4n →]
☒ File Transfer Protocol (FTP)	[Easy-peasy-*ish*]

TECHNOLOGIES [NOTES]	
☐ Rich Site Summary (RSS)	[Need to learn a lot about this Rss fella →]
☒ Bandwidth, bitrates, sample rates	[I need to brush up]
☒ ID3 tags	[Transferrable skill from my music daze]

SKILLS [NOTES]	
☒ Audio editing	[Familiar enough with it to get me started. Need more practice.]
☐ Graphic design	[Not required, would make more marketable. I need practice]
☒ Creating copy	

Notes [⬆]

[1] **'tude**. at·ti·tude ˈadəˌt(y)o͞od/ noun: a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something.

References [↑]

Morris, Tee., and Chuck Tomasi. *Podcasting for Dummies*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2017.

Morris, Tee. (b). "Podcasting." *TeeMorris.com*. Retrieved from http://teemorris.com/podcasts/