Podcasts
and the
Public Humanities

an introduction to scholarly podcasting

by Chris Gratien

Preface

Over the past decade, the podcast has emerged as a dominant medium for radio-style content. In contrast with traditional radio, the podcast is open to anyone and not highly-bounded by geography. This brief introduction to podcasting is intended for scholars and students interested in using the podcast medium as a means of bridging the gap between the knowledge-production of the university and the large public audiences for scholarly content.

This continually updated podcast guide is written by an academic for other academics who want to try their hand at podcasting. It is based in part built on the cumulative experience of my independent academic podcast team. Since 2011, Ottoman History Podcast has released more than 300 episodes and featured the work of over 200 researchers and scholars of the Ottoman Empire and beyond. In the process, we have learned not only about the ins and outs of podcasting and web publishing but also the challenges and joys of presenting academic content in an accessible and public forum. In addition to opening up the format and audience for radio, the podcast is one medium that offers yet-unrealized potential for an alternate form of scholarly production that reaches a wider and more-global audience.

Therefore, while this packet contains many guidelines and recommendations for new podcasters, we would like to stress that above all, the podcast and other new media challenge us to be more creative about the way we work together and engage with the vast majority of our potential audience outside the university. Podcasting can be more than a means of promoting academic research and publications; when done right, it has the potential to be a *means of production* itself.

Note: this manuscript was originally produced for the "Podcasts and the Public Humanities" workshop sponsored by Boston College in March 2017 and has been updated for a similar workshop at UC-San Diego in May 2017. I have also used it in a workshop with the team of AnthroPod sponsored by the Society for Cultural Anthropology in December 2017.

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Chris Gratien
Charlottesville, VA
1 December 2017

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Introduction

A podcast is digital audio or video that can be downloaded, usually in serial format, both in individual installments and on a subscription basis. The origins of the podcast may be found in radio, the emergence of the internet and mp3 technology, and the spread of devices that play digital audio such as computers, iPods, and mobile phones. Today, the podcast is a quintessential niche medium; most podcasts deal with a relatively narrow topic and cater to a very specific audience. Popular formats include talk radio-style discussion, interview, comedy, storytelling, investigative reporting, and mixtape.

While many podcasts focus their efforts on occupying a niche, the reach of the podcast is categorically different than that of traditional radio because of the global nature of the internet. People all over the world may not listen to your podcast, but your podcast *has the potential* to reach people all over the world if presented in the right format. For academic scholars and practitioners of the public humanities this presents an exciting and daunting prospect: the internet has categorically changed makeup of our audience.

Public scholarship has historically been based in local communities. For historians, museums, archives, parks, fields of oral history research, and university events open to the public have typically served as fruitful forums. In the United States, the key role of community in public scholarship has meant that the participation of scholars working on places and periods beyond the bounds of American history and culture have had a comparatively small role to play. With the internet, public scholarship is no longer implicitly local or national, allowing scholars in many fields to greatly expand their public audience and contribution.

This observation may seem obvious and even trite, but as we have learned through years of producing an internet-radio program about the Ottoman Empire, reaching those audiences does change the way we do things. The topics of interest in Turkey, where much of our audience can be found, are very different than topics of interest in the US. Content in Turkish reaches a much greater number of people but from a much more limited geography; content in English reaches the whole world but is alienating for the vast majority of people who reside in the geographies of the former Ottoman Empire. Our experience has revealed that the audience for academic content is not only much greater than many of us ever realized but also that academic content as it is conventionally-produced in the United States often speaks to the interests of other Anglophone academics much more than the equally-valuable concerns of the large global public. Reaching that public does not require abandoning the conventions and methods of scholarly production; it means finding ways of bridging the gap and translating our work for a new and more accessible medium.

In the pages that follow, we hope to offer a wealth of resources for getting started on your new scholarly podcast. While we will draw heavily on examples from our own format, a largely

interview-based radio program about the Ottoman Empire, most of what follows below should be applicable to scholarly podcasts irrespective of format and topics of focus.

The Podcast: What it is, what it is not

When people think of podcasts, the medium that comes to mind is probably much narrower than what the podcast medium actually encompasses. A podcast can feature one or many speakers. It can tell a story. It can further a conversation. It can voice an opinion, and it need not contain any voices at all. **Any digital audio can be published as a podcast**.

Generally, podcasts mimic radio in their basic format, and in contrast with other web content such as YouTube videos or blog articles, they tend to take a longer form. Ten minutes might be on the short side for a podcast. An hour might seem long. But if you check the web, you will find many podcast episodes lasting multiple hours in length, as the medium is not generally bounded by a scarcity of airtime. **Most podcast episodes produced by radio professionals fall within the 20-60 minute range**.

It is hard to point to what the prototypical podcast should be. Yet if your project does not have all of the following attributes, then it probably is not a podcast.

- A podcast should be delivered via a method of syndication, generally an **RSS or XML feed** that allows subscription.
- A podcast should be **downloadable** in mp3 or another format
- A podcast should revolve around **audio**. Many podcasters also make use of video, images, text, and other digital media, but audio is an essential component.
- A podcast should involve some **creative** or at least transformative use of audio.
- A podcast should allow for **passive engagement** and listening. While there are many ways of building interactivity into a podcast, a project that requires listeners to be logged into a website and interacting or demands 100% of an individual's attention is not normally ideal for the podcast format, because **many people listen to podcasts while doing other activities**.

If you think the points above do not describe a prospective project of yours, do not fear. There are plenty of other media for engaging in public scholarship, some of which may actually reach many more people than a podcast. Standard blogs, YouTube channels, and social media accounts are all great ways of reaching a large audience. If your project will not be made available for easy download or will rely heavily on visual and textual material, think carefully before claiming the podcast as your core medium.

Producing a Podcast

Good podcasting entails a multi-stage production process. Podcasters may neglect some of these stages or even discard one of them (such as planning) as a trademark of their format, and there are many tools out there that can eliminate or consolidate certain steps. But when setting out to podcast, make sure to consider to what extent you are equipped to handle each of these stages.

1. Concept - defining your podcast
2. Planning - identifying themes, topics, participants, materials, and podcast elements
3. Recording - capturing your raw content in digital audio format
4. Editing - editing the digital audio and creating a single file for your compiled audio
5. Publication - releasing your new audio file into your feed, blog, or chosen platform
6. Promotion - getting the word out about your podcast and engaging with audiences

Much of what goes into these stages will feel intuitive, but if you find yourself struggling with any of them, the guidelines and additional resources below will help you keep the wheels turning.

1. Concept

Ottoman History Podcast was founded by two graduate students, Chris Gratien and Emrah Safa Gürkan, over a coffee in the library of Georgetown University. Both were students of the Ottoman Empire, one American and one Turkish, both loving to talk and one having rudimentary knowledge of web publishing and audio editing. Many considerations were not made, but among the most basic questions that should have been considered at greater length was whether "Ottoman History Podcast" was the best name. While the "Ottoman" modifier definitely helped us reach a core target audience, this long and fairly generic name certainly limits the perception of the project in the long run. Moving beyond the Ottoman domains in our historical discussions has certainly presented a branding challenge in terms of both reaching audiences and courting contributors.

When conceiving of your podcast, **think very carefully about what you want the format to be**, what you wants its brand to be, and most importantly, how you think the name will be received. Do you want your podcast to be entertaining? Do you want it to be perceived as scholarly? Do you want it to serve as a means of expanding your own intellectual horizons, or do you want to use it to develop and showcase your own expertise? Do you want it to be a short-run series of podcasts or a boundless project last lasts for years and hundreds of episodes? You may want all of these, but carefully thinking about the long-term product is key to striking the right balance.

2. Planning

Once you've defined your format, you will want to **plan for your recordings**. You may decide that the best plan is to not have too much of a plan, if you are looking to achieve spontaneous and organic conversations for example. If you're doing storytelling or will have a narrative arc, you might work on a rough script that has room for change or allows for places to break away from the overarching narrative using other segments. If you are recording narrative without a script, then you will tend to achieve the effect of stream of consciousness. If you are recording conversation based on a read script, then you will probably achieve the effect of being very hard to listen to.

For the Ottoman History Podcast interview format, we have been careful to allow conversations to develop organically. However, there are some common elements of interviews that we as podcasters have tended to underestimate in terms of the planning they require. **First and foremost are the introduction and conclusion**. While you might consider yourself a master of organic conversation, you may be surprised at how hard it is to start and finish a radio program. We have also moved towards pre-reading of guest materials and circulation of **demo questions** before recording interviews. The podcast does not always go according to script, but these are helpful for assuring that all parties are on the same page. If you are having guests on your program, you will want to be sure that they leave feeling that their work or opinions were presented in an accurate and favorable light. If you're looking for spirited debate and argument, you want to be sure that all parties are aware of and consent to the terms of that debate beforehand.

If it is a live recording or interview, you may also want to **consider what outside elements will appear in your podcast**. If you will be referring to images, try to have them on hand. If you need to refer to books, articles, or other sources, make sure you have them written down somewhere. If you are interviewing a professor, make sure you know their title, affiliation, subject of expertise, and how to pronounce their name. Make sure to double-check this type of info.

3. Recording

The most challenging aspect of the podcast process is probably recording. Before you even press record, there are a number of considerations that you must make. **On what type of device will you record your podcast?** Are you satisfied with the audio quality of your laptop microphone or smartphone? Do you need to invest in a professional microphone, and if so, what type? What audio format should you record in? In what type of sonic environment would you like to record? Do you want background noise or do you want a quiet, studio environment? Would you like to bring other voices into your program using remote interviews via phone or Skype?

In the beginning, the Ottoman History Podcast did not involve too much consideration of recording conditions. Our first episodes were recorded on a laptop or on a simple handheld Sony recorder lodged into the bottom of an upside-down styrofoam cup. Through experience we have continually optimized our recording setup to account for audio quality, editability, sonic environment, portability, and cost, arriving at a multi-microphone set of equipment that is 100% portable, independent of a computer, and costs a few hundred dollars. There will be more information about equipment options in the equipment guide below.

Another consideration that must be made while recording, however, is being aware of what the product *actually* sounds like. You should record on a device that allows you to do **soundchecks** or hear the recording through headphones in realtime to be sure that the audio you are capturing is good and usable audio. If you spend half an hour recording a prepared text only to find that the whole thing has been rendered useless due to puffs of air on the letter "p," or if you spend weeks tracking down a prominent scholar for an interview only to find the microphone they were using was malfunctioning, you will learn the virtues of monitoring a recording as it unfolds. Some recording devices have volume level monitors, so you can see roughly how the technical side is going without actually listening to the audio.

During the recording, especially in interview format, **remember that there is a third person in the room: the audience**. Do not alienate your audience by referring to things they may not know without explaining. Make sure you address people by names and signpost from time to time to ensure your audience is not lost.

4. Editing

Each podcast is different, but **podcasters may be initially surprised with the amount of time they spend doing a good and thorough edit of their audio**. For Ottoman History Podcast interviews, an experienced editor may spend an average of two to three minutes on editing *per minute* of recorded audio. If you're new to the game or face some particularly difficult editing challenges, editing may take even longer. However, time spent on editing is also related to the recording process, and there are ways to minimize the amount of work put into processing your audio files and editing the composition by controlling the recording process.

Editing is also a headache for podcasters because it requires **the right software**. As the editing guide below will explain, free open-source software that is decent and user friendly is available, but in seeking to achieve a more professional sound, this software may prove inadequate or clunky. Meanwhile, some software aids in the recording process by providing a good virtual environment for directly recording your audio onto a laptop or mobile device. Here too the extent and means of editing are largely dependent on the format you choose to adopt. But regardless, podcasting will at some point impel you to carry out basic or advanced audio editing. If you are a scholar who wants to achieve a professional sound but will not have the time to learn about editing, it will be helpful to work with a good editor, outsource the editing tasks, or explore the resources at your host institution.

5. Publication

Once your podcast is ready, you should publish it online. This requires uploading the file to your hosting and making sure that the file then in turn appears in your **podcast feed**. You will probably want to establish a website as a destination for your content and make sure that your podcast is properly listed in **iTunes and other directories**.

It is easy to change or update content once it has been published, but particularly when it comes to podcasts, you will want to do your best that everything is in good order before publishing. **Updating an audio file with problems takes time**; it is not as simple as logging in and fixing a typo. Moreover, your podcast may have already reached large numbers of people before you catch your mistake. **Your episode will be instantaneously downloaded** by many of your subscribers, and re-releasing the file into your feed will cause a nuisance or disrupt the overall flow of traffic.

When publishing, it is also important to consider **timing and scheduling**. How often do you want your podcast to be published? Do you want to make a number of installments available all at once, or would you like to space them out? Will people expect regular content? How frequent is too frequent to publish? These questions relate to the format, but generally speaking, you will want to be careful not to have your episodes bumping into each other too much. Sometimes quick releases back to back will be beneficial and increase the overall profile of the project. If you only publish a few times a year, then you should be producing something really special to keep the audience's attention. If you release an episode before your followers have had the chance to check out your previous episode, the individual impact of a single episode may be decreased because you are simply releasing too much content. On the other hand, if each of your episodes caters to a small subset of an overall audience that tends to pick and choose, more episodes may be better.

6. Promotion

Once you've published, you are almost done, but you still might want to **put some effort towards promoting your content**. Depending on your audience, the venue of promotion will differ. Some websites have a newsletter. Most projects producing serialized content maintain a social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms. Academics may also utilize professional or departmental listservs. Be careful not to spam your prospective audience.

Another means of promoting your content is to partner with other websites. For example, there may be blogs that would like to feature a particular episode of yours or engage in cross-promotion. While not necessarily generating a large amount of traffic, such partnerships may help in diversifying the audiences you reach and foster collaborative bonds that may serve your project in the long term. It is generally nice to have friends.

Finally, you may want to consider **paid promotions** for your content. Most prominent internet platforms are commercialized. While you cannot do too much to change your Google results rankings, you can pay Facebook to promote posts from your podcast's Facebook page. You might be able to justify spending a few dollars to promote something you worked hours on. On the other hand, there is only so much that paid promotion can do for a scholarly podcast. In the case of Ottoman History Podcast, 2-3 dollars spent promoting an episode on Facebook tends to yield beneficial results. More than this and we begin advertising to people who really are not interested in our content. Note that Facebook typically only shows your post to a portion of your followers for free in addition to whatever organic shares that post generates, a rather unpleasant policy that will make it worth paying for promotion even if you command a hefty group.

Public Humanities and Digital Humanities Done Right

The emergence of digital tools has reshaped academic production. In the broadest sense, any of us who write using computers, find information through internet searches, or store data and documents in digital format are involved in the digital humanities as a discipline defined by its employment of digital tools in methods of research and analysis. But generally speaking, the digital humanities is a term that refers to humanities research that employs computational tools and methods that achieve a result not attainable in analog format. Thus, while a podcast is certainly a digital medium, if that medium is employed in a manner that is essentially the same as a live lecture or written paper, some will debate whether or not that podcast is really a good representative of digital humanities scholarship.

By this same token, the term public humanities must also involve some methodological approach that goes beyond producing research that is "public." It is rather engagement with a public in a manner that influences both analysis and content that is intended by the term "public humanities," with the emphasis on an active relationship between the scholar and audiences outside the academy and universities.

A podcast featuring academics talking about their research contributes both to the digital humanities in the sense that it steps outside the box of our usual media and modes of producing scholarship and the public humanities in the sense that it seeks to make that scholarship available to wider public. If it is done so with little regard for the potentials of digital media and unique concerns of the public, it falls short of effectively employing either public humanities or digital humanities approaches. There is nothing inherently wrong with not being either of these approaches, but in this section, I will reflect on how to podcast in a manner that does justice to the spirit of both the public humanities and the digital humanities in keeping with three basic principles.

1. Maintain the nuance of good scholarship while seeking effective communication with a non-academic audience, and make efforts to reach that audience.
2. Take advantage of the unique features of digital media and podcasts in particular in order to allow your scholarship to take a novel form.
3. Do not merely use your podcast as an outlet for scholarship that happens elsewhere. Make the podcast the place where scholarship happens.

Who is the audience?

Academic content is notoriously boring, even for academics, but to a large extent, this boringness is a consequence of the form and linguistic register in which it is presented. The same analytical frameworks and language that make almost any topic potentially interesting for academics may serve to make even the most interesting topics boring for non-specialist

audiences. Yet it is not reasonable to say that there is a topic in the humanities which is simply incomprehensible to a non-academic audience.

The **register that university faculty employ in the classroom** is probably an excellent linguistic register to employ in your public humanities podcast. In other words, think of your audience as a body of undergraduates. They are (in theory) educated and curious but lack the expertise and experience of most academics in parsing through new material. When you elevate your language and terminology, some will find the podcast even more stimulating while others may feel alienated or lost. Audiences will thank you to **define potentially unfamiliar terms** and will be happy to receive **background information** that might not be necessary for the academic specialist. But since you must balance the expectation of different listeners and economize on words and space, know that when employing a less scholarly register you may sacrifice either coverage or nuance.

For podcasts that focus on subjects pertaining to regions outside the United States, know that while you will definitely reach people in the US who share in interest in those places, much of your potential audience probably resides in those places **outside the US**. Consider developing your content with an eye and an ear towards what those audiences might expect and like to hear. If you do so effectively, your podcast may serve as a point of intersection for many different audiences from a variety of "publics" listening to and engaging with a particular discussion or debate from a diverse set of trajectories.

In striving to maximize the audience for your given project, be realistic about the potential reach of your podcast. Budget your time and tailor your format accordingly. Remember that a good podcast will almost certainly find a larger audience than an academic publication. In this regard, just putting academic research out there, even if you do not always succeed in checking your academic register, will achieve the goal of making your scholarship "more public."

As an example from the experience of Ottoman History Podcast, the audience for a fairly regionally-specific podcast in English might display an even balance of distribution between the Anglophone world and elsewhere. Most traffic is split between the United States and Turkey, with more than half of podcast downloads originating in the United States and UK, more than half of the social media following based in Turkey, and a very even split in website traffic between Turkey and the United States. In addition to a few thousand podcast feed subscribers, we reach almost 30,000 Facebook followers as of March 2017. An average episode is played/downloaded between 5,000 and 10,000 times within a year of release. Blog traffic, which has nearly doubled in the past two years, currently stands at over 50,000 pageviews per month.

The Podcasting Scholar

Podcasting *can* be a unique act of scholarship. There are many things that can be done in radio format that are very difficult to achieve on paper. Most obviously, sonic material and

methodologies can be seamlessly integrated into podcast presentation. Narrative texts and primary sources may come to life when read out loud by a talented orator. Multivocality is hard to create in print, but podcasts thrive on a variety of voices. In general, the spoken word can be used to communicate emotion in certain ways that text cannot. More broadly, internet media allow the scholar to employ maps, visuals, and interactive elements that cannot be as easily introduced into an academic text.

The podcasting scholar conducts research and **produces scholarship with the podcast medium in mind** rather than thinking of the podcast as a venue for research that is already published elsewhere. Academic podcasts can benefit from the tools of investigative journalism, radio storytelling, and multimedia documentary presentation. Take advantage of the strength and popularity of podcasting as a storytelling medium to illustrate your points through narrative rather the more analytical structure of an academic article. Use the personality of the medium to engage in spirited debates that will attract the interest of both the vast podcast public as well as your colleagues. Remember that there are some things that you cannot do in a podcast. While you can cite sources verbally or on an accompanying website, **podcasts do not have footnotes**, and you cannot really skip around or skim a podcast like a book or article (though you may choose to make your content available in segments). Know that speaking on a podcast is a skill all its own and developing a voice may take some work and require some experience for acclimation. There is a reason why so many universities offer a degree in communications.

In seeking to be a podcasting scholar, think about the type of academic production you already do and try to go beyond it. If you like to lecture, how can you take advantage of the podcast medium to improve upon your live lectures? If you're used to working alone, how can you use the podcast as a new space of collaboration? What are some of the sonic or non-conventional sources that you might work with if you had the opportunity to use a medium like the podcast where they could be better brought to life?

While Ottoman History Podcast mostly revolves around interviews, we have experimented with some other formats. One of our early formats was that of a historiographical mixtape that interspersed historical commentary with music clips, employing those clips in a transformative manner by discussing their relationship to the historical topics being discussed. We have also featured episodes with commentary on soundscapes or recorded on location in a particular setting. In addition, we have used the podcast to develop episodes with an investigative narrative arc more in line with the very popular story-based podcasts produced by professional journalists.

Web Etiquette for Academics

Being a scholar online means navigating different intellectual cultures. Just as the way we act changes depending on whether we are presenting at a scholarly conference or teaching before an undergraduate classroom, we must be mindful of the norms of and most effective communication techniques for the different spaces we inhabit online.

One of the most delicate questions is how to communicate with your audience. If you operate a large social media account or active blog, you may receive many comments, questions, and requests from your listeners. Invariably, some of these comments will be erroneous, emotionally-charged, or even deliberately injurious to others. As a general rule of thumb, limit your public engagement to constructive forms of communication. Respond to a question for clarification with a link that contains additional resources. Give positive affirmation (such as a Facebook "like") to constructive feedback. Try not to respond to inflammatory comments and resist the urge to censor. Let the other listeners respond if they like.

Another important consideration is citation. Generally speaking, citation standards on the web do not meet citation standards of most academic disciplines. Even a site like Wikipedia, which has good and relatively scholarly citation guidelines, cannot in practice assure that every little article contains the proper sources and citations. Promoting good sourcing and citation is one way that scholars in the public humanities can do their part to influence internet culture in a positive manner. Give clear sources and captions for images shared on your page. Supply copious reading lists to accompany your episodes. *Talk about* sources on your podcast. Do not let them be a mystery. *Ottoman History Podcast built its social media presence by sharing images with proper sourcing/citations and thoughtful captions. All of our episodes come with a bibliography.*

The Role of Institutions

Podcasting scholars may benefit from access to various forms of institutional support. Most basically, our universities provide offices and other spaces that may be used for recording. Beyond this, most possess recording equipment that can be lent out or have a professionally-equipped radio booths and media labs that can be used by students and faculty. Some universities will be able to provide other forms of support such as hosting, web development tools, or paid assistance from student workers to deal with issues like audio editing.

Deciding whether to work formally or informally through your own institution will depend on your needs and what your institution has to offer. When considering the potential role of an institution in your own podcast project, think about the costs and benefits for both parties. What will be the advantages of having the public backing of a particular university or professional organization, and do you see any disadvantages? Should such relationships and support be formalized or remain more casual? What are the critical needs that an institution may be able to address with regard to funding or technical support? What do academic institutions do well, and what are the drawbacks to institutionalizing a project?

Another way in which institutions may support scholarly podcasts is by defining clear standards and guidelines for recognizing digital humanities and public humanities scholarship. Podcasting is a new medium, and many academic institutions may struggle to define a podcasting scholar's

contribution to the field. Most departments and academic associations continue to redefine standards for recognition of unconventional projects like podcasts and digital humanities scholarship as they emerge. If institutional recognition is a concern, look into your departmental guidelines. If departmental guidelines do not exist, check with the academic associations in which you are a member in order to find out if they have laid out any guidelines for your field.

While many scholarly podcasts are run out of a particular university or department, Ottoman History Podcast has always remained formally independent. This independence has enabled us to better work across academic institutions and allow new contributors to feel equally invested in the project. However, our project has benefitted from many informal forms of support that are available to academics at universities. These range from spaces reserved for recording to indirectly financial forms of support such as software subscriptions made available to university employees. In one case, we employed a graduate student from a Turkish university to share in the audio editing burdens, and he was paid by his department/mentor as a research assistant as part of his professional development.

Resources:

56 Ways to do the Public Humanities
(https://www.neh.gov/divisions/fedstate/in-the-field/56-ways-do-the-public-humanities)
Using the Popularity of Podcasts to Communicate the Humanities
(http://www.britishnavalhistory.com/using-popularity-podcasts-communicate-humanities/)
OF PODCASTS, PERFORMANCES, AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: ASSERTING YOURSELF AS A JUNIOR SCHOLAR
(https://mlagrads.mla.hcommons.org/2016/05/31/of-podcasts-performances-and-public-engagement-asserting-yourself-as-a-junior-scholar/)

Publishing Your Podcast

One of the most challenging questions faced by a new podcaster is how and where to publish your podcast. There are numerous options for hosting and web publishing, each with their own particular advantages and disadvantages. This section offers a brief guide to the essentials of podcast publication and explains some of the dominant options currently used by podcasters.

File Formats

When capturing audio, **record in a lossless format** such as .wav. This will ensure that you are capturing at the highest quality possible for your device. You can work with the .wav audio in your audio editing software and export your file in a variety of compressed formats for download.

The dominant file format for publishing podcasts is MPEG Audio Layer III better known as **MP3**. Podcasters use the MP3 format because it can be played on almost any device and allows you to greatly compress your files. Most audio editing software can export a raw .wav file or session file to .mp3. Another less common file format is ogg, which comes with the benefit of not being constrained by software patents.

MP3 files are compressed audio files, and as such, will vary in sound quality. The highest quality MP3 compressions involve minimal quality loss. A 320 kbps (kilobytes per second) MP3 will sound almost identical to CD quality. **192 kbps** is a commonly-used MP3 rate for high-quality audio. 128 kbps will create a good quality at 1/10th of file size of a .wav file. Lower rates offer even further compression with increasing quality reduction.

When choosing your MP3 compression rate, be mindful of file sizes and the potential burdens on your listeners with limited bandwidth or who listen on mobile devices. If you want to achieve the highest quality sound possible, go for 192 kbps or higher. If you have recorded your podcast on a laptop or mobile device or employ Skype, consider a lower rate since these devices already tend to produce low fidelity recordings. **Note that you can cut the filesize of your MP3 in half simply by converting from Stereo to Mono format**. If your podcast mainly consists of spoken word that is recorded on a Mono track (by a cardioid dynamic microphone for example), you do not necessarily need to publish in Stereo.

While some devices allow you to record directly in MP3 format, avoid recording in MP3 if you plan to do any editing on the file. Editing MP3 files may lead to additional distortion.

Hosting

For listeners to download your podcast, it must be uploaded to the web. Unlike streaming video content, for which YouTube and Vimeo are by far the dominant platforms for hosting, there is

no obvious answer to the question of hosting for podcasts, and there is no free option that will be 100% satisfying.

One option is simply to find affordable web hosting that allows you to upload your podcast files to a server as any website would (such as Amazon S3 https://aws.amazon.com/s3/). Basic hosting costs can be as little as a few dollars per month. However, one must be very careful when using standard web hosting for a podcast. Most hosts have caps on either file size or bandwidth, even if they advertise large or unlimited amounts of storage. Since your podcast will potentially be downloaded by thousands of people immediately upon release, using a service that caps bandwidth may result in a popular file being deleted or traffic being suspended.

Many companies specialize in **hosting specifically for podcasts**. A defining feature of these services is that they often allow for **unlimited bandwidth** with premium account options sometimes allow for **unlimited storage** as well. Some will even allow you to upload in .wav or other non-compressed formats. The best companies may also have **customizable web players** for your content that you can embed on a website. However, companies that specialize in podcast hosting *sometimes* employ advanced methods of reducing bandwidth by re-encoding your files upon upload or for streaming purposes.

For academics, another hosting option will be a university server. Some institutions may be willing and eager to provide space and bandwidth for scholars. But the amount of support available to podcasting scholars, who require fairly large amounts of bandwidth, will vary from institution to institution. Make sure to look into these options if securing independent hosting seems too costly or daunting. Publishing on your university server will give the added advantage of making you and your university the sole proprietors of your podcast, minimizing the amount that third-party sites can use and profit from your work.

Popular Podcast Hosts

There are many viable podcast hosting services out there with various advantages and disadvantages. Here are a few common options that each offer different benefits.

> SoundCloud (https://soundcloud.com/)

Ottoman History Podcast uses SoundCloud hosting. SoundCloud took off as a space for music artists to showcase their work and build a following around the page's social media functions, but in the past few years, SoundCloud has emerged as a viable option for basic podcast hosting. The nice features of SoundCloud include nearly limitless uploads with a premium account, an attractive, customizable, and embeddable player, and most crucially, the ability to have your **original .mp3 file** downloadable in the RSS feed. SoundCloud allows for both quick and efficient streaming as well as downloading through podcast handlers with zero loss or change in audio quality. *Note that SoundCloud automatically screens your files for copyrighted content.*

If you plan to use music that is not your own in the podcast, make sure that you have permissions before doing so.

Libsyn (https://www.libsyn.com/)

Born in 2004, Libsyn is the oldest podcasting hosting service. For podcasters or podcasting consortiums working on a big scale, Libsyn offers a range of plans to suit scaled-up podcast projects. Some plans allow you to buy into relatively-low cost features such as a customizable mobile app. Many of the **real podcast professionals** use Libsyn.

Blubrry (https://www.blubrry.com/)

Blubrry is a popular podcast platform, offering both podcast hosting and a good podcast directory. Its hosting prices are higher than some competing options.

Podbean (https://www.podbean.com/)

If you're **not looking to do anything too fancy,** Podbean is a great option because it offers some free and low-cost hosting. Most importantly, Podbean podcast feeds can be customized through a limited but serviceable blog-like tool, meaning that if you just want a simple and nice-looking blog for your podcast, you can kill two birds with one stone using Podbean.

Internet Archive (https://archive.org/)

Scholarly podcasters may be especially attracted to hosting with archive.org, which will have the added benefit of making your podcast file part of the Internet Archive. There is nothing particularly user-friendly or attractive about archive.org other than the fact that it is completely free. If you think your podcast will be more important for **posterity** than in terms of short-term traffic and visibility, archive.org is an option.

acast (https://www.acast.com/)

One of the promising new podcast hosts is acast. Podcasters who want totally free hosting might look to acast as an option. The downside to acast for scholarly podcasts is obvious. Free hosting comes with the caveat of **advertisements** delivered by acast included in your podcast, though users have some control over when and how the ads appear. The good news is that for those looking to monetize, acast shares the **ad revenue**.

Mixcloud (https://www.mixcloud.com/)

Mixcloud is not really a viable podcast host because it **does not allow for downloads**, but if is a great way of hosting streamable web radio. It was developed as a SoundCloud-like tool for DJs. One of the unique features of Mixcloud is that (just as YouTube) it allows users to identify

copyrighted content in the file. Royalties that would be paid on the license for music or other content are covered by the advertising that is automatically delivered through Mixcloud. If you are looking for an easy way to use potentially hazardous material like **copyrighted music** in your podcast, Mixcloud offers what looks to be a legal option.

Resources:

8 Best Sites to Host Your Podcasts
(https://www.technorms.com/37746/best-sites-to-host-your-podcasts)
How to Host Podcast MP3 on Archive.org
(https://turbofuture.com/internet/How-to-Host-Podcast-Audio-on-Archiveorg)
Soundcloud or Mixcloud - Which is the best site to upload a DJ mix?
(http://blog.liveschool.net/soundcloud-or-mixcloud/)

RSS Feed

The **most important component** of your podcast is not its website but rather its RSS feed. RSS originally means "rich site summary" and comprises a very small file that contains basic data and summaries of your content. The two common file types for feeds are .rss and .xml. The feed allows your listeners to **subscribe and automatically download** your new content. Feeds are also used for submitting your podcast to various **directories**.

While you can make your own feed, for most podcasts, either your podcast hosting or your website hosting will enable you to automatically generate a feed. The feed should contain an entry for your particular file as well as a url for that audio file.

Podcast hosting services will usually generate a customizable feed that allows you upload your files easily through a user-friendly interface.

If you operate a blog attached to your podcast, the **blog will also generate a feed** to which your fans may subscribe. Most good blogging platforms allow you to add **"enclosures"** to your blog posts. If you attach the url for your podcast file as an enclosure, the blog will generate a feed that includes your audio file along with other information, thus serving as an effective podcast feed.

Many podcasters send their feed through an additional layer of handling using tools such as **Feedburner** (http://www.feedburner.com). The advantage to doing so is that by using a Feedburner feed as your main podcast feed, you can change the source feed (if you change podcast or blog hosting) without changing the url of the main feed. In addition, Feedburner has some tools that enable you to control how your feed is processed by platforms such as iTunes in case some things are not coming out quite right. *Note that Feedburner is a free resource operated by Google but is not currently being developed. While it has existed for a long time, some fear that Google's lack of attention to Feedburner may render it defunct or obsolete.*

Note that you want your podcast feed and each post in it to be **fairly compact.** The number of entries that may appear in your feed at one time is constrained by the maximum feed size. If you are using your blog as the base feed, find a way to create the feed out of a short post form that only includes title, summary, and enclosure url. While the filesize of your audio does not impact the feed filesize, copious amounts of text do.

Ottoman History Podcast's feed is currently generated as follows: Our podcast host (SoundCloud) generates a feed that contains urls of .mp3 files. Each .mp3 file is then added to its corresponding blog post on the Ottoman History Podcast website as an enclosure, which in turn becomes part of the feed. Then the blog RSS feeds into Feedburner, which generates that url that stands as the main podcast feel of Ottoman History Podcast. This multi-layered process gives us more control over the appearance and order of the feed, allows us to change base feeds without disruption of how our podcast appears in its directory listings, and in addition enables the creation of multiple podcast feeds for different sub-series.

Submitting to iTunes

After publishing your RSS Feed, you will want to **submit your podcast to various podcast listings**. While there are many sites and apps that people use to explore and download podcasts, iTunes, which was developed alongside the iPod technology that helped birth the podcast as a genre, is one of the most popular and commonly used, though few would argue that it is the best podcast handling app. If your podcast is listed in iTunes, then it will automatically appear in other podcast listings as well, and it will show up in searches in the same place where many people shop for music and other audio.

Recently, iTunes has made it easier for podcasters to submit their podcasts and change their listings. You will need a valid iTunes account (complete with credit card information, but **listing is free**). Podcasts can be submitted and modified using a web based tool called iTunes Connect (https://itunesconnect.apple.com/). For successful submission, your podcast will have to conform to the ever-changing iTunes guidelines, which stipulate among many other things that your podcast feed have a completely square image within a particular range of sizes.

When submitting to iTunes, take special care to ensure that your title and description display properly. This is one place where Feedburner may prove useful. Put some thought into the image you would like to use for your podcast and check the iTunes directory to see what other podcasters do. Most importantly, make sure you are listing your podcast in a suitable sub-genre.

You can always change aspects of your iTunes listing using your RSS feed, but note that there is usually a delay in your iTunes listing being updated, sometimes lasting under an hour and sometimes longer than a day. You can login to iTunes connect in order to expedite the refreshing of your feed if you need to. Also note that it may take a few days to have your iTunes listing

approved, so you might not want to announce the launch of your podcast until your RSS feed and iTunes listing are in good order. You want people to be able to subscribe.

Webpage

While many podcast hosts will generate an accessible and fairly attractive display for your podcast feed, you may want to consider a creating website for your podcast as well. A blog is a natural format for three reasons: 1. Blogs can generate their own **RSS feed**, meaning that you can use your blog as your podcast feed 2. Blogs are user friendly and come with customizable templates that will allow you to get started quickly 3. Having a blog will allow you to post other **non-podcast content** such as visuals, supplementary materials, or typical blog posts.

In addition, you may want to buy a .com, .org, .net, or similar **custom domain** for your podcast. Many blogging platforms will allow you to buy a domain within the platform, allowing for easy setup but usually coming with additional costs. GoDaddy is one of the best places to shop for low-priced domains (http://www.godaddy.com/). The recently launched Google Domains service also comes highly recommended, as your domain purchase will come with integration for a range of Google services (https://domains.google/#/).

The main advantage of having a web page is that it provides a home for your project that is in your complete control. A podcast with its own webpage or url looks more professional and unique than simply using links to iTunes or SoundCloud

Popular Blogging Platforms

As stated above, you do not need a blog or website for you podcast. But if you're looking to maintain a webpage for your project as well, there are numerous blogging platforms. Here I will distinguish between three types of options for podcasters that are especially attractive. At the time when Ottoman History Podcast and my other web projects were created, Blogger was the best option, but if I was starting a project today, I might choose WordPress instead.

WordPress - .org (https://wordpress.org/)

WordPress is in many ways the **industry standard** for blogging. With many attractive customizable templates and low-cost hosting options, WP sites are both affordable and well-designed. When people imagine currently fashionable look for professional blogs, what they usually imagine is invariably some form of a common WP template.

Another great feature of WP is that blogging software is available for free at wordpress.org. All you need to do to blog with WP is **purchase some hosting**, which can cost as little as a few dollars per month, and then you are ready to go. The **learning curve** for wordpress.org might be a little **steep** at first, but because WP is the dominant blogging platform, online help guides and forums will probably answer any questions you have once you get started. Of course, WP

allows for media enclosures, meaning that you can use your blog feeds as podcast feeds, and while it has its own script, most embeddable players such as those furnished by SoundCloud have compatible WP alternatives.

Blogger (https://www.blogger.com/)

Owned by Google, Blogger was once the best option for free and easy blogging. However, Google has indefinitely ceased to develop the Blogger platform, which is not aging so well. The available Blogger templates do not have the up-to-date look of WordPress templates and are **not as easily customizable**, although Blogger is functionally similar to WordPress as a platform in the hands of a savvy web designer.

Blogger does still retain some good advantages. Whereas WordPress requires you to at least purchase hosting, **Blogger is truly 100% free**. Because the free storage on your Google account will be quite capacious, you may find that the free Google hosting is all you need to take care of your images and other materials (you may want to open a separate Google account for using Blogger if you are concerned about space, so that your Gmail storage does not create a conflict, but Google Drive customers will find that their drive accounts already come with more than enough Google hosting to take care of a Blogger website). Blogger also has a **CSS backdoor**, which means that if you're willing to play with its frustrating and antiquated templates, you can fully customize your blog to the point that the bland original templates are almost unrecognizable.

Wordpress - .com (https://wordpress.com/)

The advantage of wordpress.com is that it is **web-based and more user-friendly than wordpress.org**, though it is largely identical in terms of function. The downside is that professional websites on wordpress.com will come with subscription and service fees that far surpass what would be incurred by a site using wordpress.org

Resources:

8 Best Blogging Platforms Reviewed
(https://startbloggingonline.com/blog-platform-comparison-chart/)
WordPress.com vs WordPress.org
(https://ithemes.com/tutorials/wordpress-com-vs-wordpress-org/)

Accessibility and Licensing

All of the steps above are required to optimize the accessibility of your podcast for a large audience. In addition, there are a few considerations you may wish to make.

If many of your users live in places where bandwidth is a concern, you may consider producing multiple versions of your files at different MP3 compression rates to give your listeners the option of downloading a high fidelity MP3 or opting for quick and cheap download of a more compressed format. If internet censorship is an issue for a region of your target audience, try to use platforms that are not affected by censorship. *In the case of Ottoman History Podcast, we once established a parallel feed for users in Turkey when our host SoundCloud was blocked by the Turkish government. SoundCloud is currently unblocked.*

Another issue concerns resources for the **hearing-impaired** or audiences that are not fluent in English. You may receive requests that you post transcripts of the interviews for those who cannot listen, struggle to comprehend spoken English in real time, or simply prefer to read. In addition, international audiences may ask you to translate portions or the entirety of your content. These are great services to your audience, but in producing transcripts and other forms of accessibility, make sure to check with your contributors. If you have a guest on your podcast, they may not wish to have their spoken words posted publicly as text on the internet.

If you are producing a scholarly podcast, make sure that the podcast is freely available and published under a **Creative Commons** license (https://creativecommons.org/). These licenses offer a range of options specifying under what conditions your content may be reproduced. Generally, allowing for reproduction and reuse for non-commercial purposes is encouraged. Some podcasters choose to allow reuse only with attribution or without an transformative use of the content (i.e. without cutting, mixing audio etc.). *Ottoman History Podcast allows for all non-commercial use, including transformative use, so long as there is proper attribution.*

Podcast Networks

It may be possible for you to merge your new podcast with a pre-existing network or to syndicate your podcast in a larger, more visible feed. Before establishing your own podcast, try to figure out if there is a project or network that you can join with a good audience and reputation. Building an audience takes a lot of work, and developing the web infrastructure for your own podcast may take time. The internet is a graveyard for blogs and podcasts that were orphaned in their infancy.

If your main goal is to interview other scholars via Skype from the privacy of your home or office, as many podcasters do, you may consider joining a project like the New Books Network (http://newbooksnetwork.com/). This project has a well-established format and infrastructure that you can easily become part of. *Ottoman History Podcast has incorporated independent podcasts in the past by releasing their content in our feed while also allowing our contributors to release their content wherever they like, giving them the option to develop an independent following or move on from working with Ottoman History Podcast if they like.*

Podcast Equipment Guide

Anyone with computer or mobile device with access to the internet has the ability to record and upload a podcast. But in fact, few of us possess the types of equipment necessary for making a good or optimal podcast recording. This brief equipment guide explains some of the basics of recording equipment and offers recommendations for recording different types of podcasts.
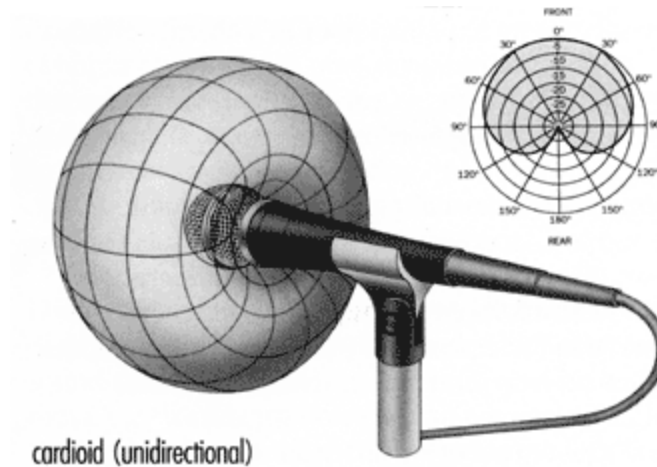
What's in a microphone?

Choosing a microphone for recording podcasts is a surprisingly daunting task because of the wide **variety of options** out there. While quality and cost are ultimately central considerations, the type of microphone you choose can be equally important in determining the type of sound you get for your recording. The following information below is meant for podcasts that revolve primarily around the human voice.

To consider which microphone to pick, you must first determine where and how you plan to record your podcast. Will you always be in the same place? If so, you might want to build yourself a customized studio setup. Will you be podcasting on the go or need to move your equipment frequently? If so, portability should be the primary concern. Will your podcast recordings be solo or do you anticipate multiple voices? Will you have guests who may not be familiar with the podcast medium on your program? Will you need to capture music or ambient sounds along with your voices? Based on your answers to these questions, you will be able to determine which type of microphones to use.

Dynamic Microphones

If you go to a live musical performance or comedy show, it is likely that the performer will be singing or talking into a dynamic microphone. This type of microphone is generally handheld has a ball shape on the top, although if you open up the inside, you'll see that the head of the microphone itself is flat. Dynamic microphones are the easiest to use for recording voice for a number of reasons. They are ideal for capturing a single source of sound, as they tend to be highly directional. A single dynamic microphone produces a single mono track.

Podcasters may find a **cardioid** dynamic microphone especially handy. Cardioid refers to the heart-shaped range of sound that the microphone tends to pick up. A cardioid configuration means that sounds directly in front of the microphone will be captured very clearly, while sounds off to the side and behind the microphone will be faint. For this reason, cardioid microphones are great for **minimizing the impact of background noise**. While it is always important to minimize sources of noise and record in a quiet space, cardioid dynamic microphones are a must-have for podcasters who may not have control over their recording environment.

The cardioid mic's dynamic range - https://isaacfmp.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/cardioid.gif

Inside a Behringer Ultravoice Microphone

Condenser Microphones

If you are looking for the richest, clearest sound for your voice, you cannot do better than a good condenser microphone. The main difference between the condenser and dynamic microphones in physical terms is that condenser microphones contain capacitors and are much more subtle in the range of frequencies that they can capture. An omni-directional condenser microphone may also be great for capturing a diverse range of sounds in an ambient environment.

There are some serious drawbacks to condenser microphones. The first is that they **require a source of electricity** supplied by either the phantom power of a recording device or a battery. The second is that they are **highly sensitive**, will tend to pick up background noise, and require a great degree of control over the sonic environment in order to achieve an ideal recording. If you are building a studio, especially one that will be used for music, you may want

to look into getting some good condenser microphones. But proper operation of a condenser mic is more complicated than a simple dynamic microphone.

The "Podcast Microphone"

Podcasters may be drawn to a product that has come onto the market sometimes listed as a "podcast microphone." In fact, depending on your preferences, budget, and needs, such a microphone may be just the tool for your podcast. These microphones are not actually separate class of microphone but rather they are microphones geared towards consumers looking for the particular features deemed desirable for podcasting.

If we look at a popular podcasting microphone, the Yeti by Blue, a couple of features that stand out are USB compatibility, a handle volume knob, a mute button, and four different microphone configurations that you can rotate through: cardioid, stereo, omnidirectional, and bidirectional. The advantage of such a microphone is that you can record your audio directly onto a computer within the user interface of an audio capture and editing program, eliminating the need for an additional mixer or multitrack recorder. Whereas the cardioid setting may prove useful for solo podcasting, the bidirectional setting, which causes the Yeti to record out of the front and back of the microphone, is a convenient (though not ideal) way of recording a two person conversation or interview using a single microphone. If you want a **compact operation** with an eye towards Skype conversations or YouTube recordings, podcast microphones like the Blue Yeti might work well.

If you check online demonstrations, however, you may be disappointed by the sound quality of these microphones. In fact, in addition to ease of use, it seems that this brand of microphone is more designed to look the part than deliver the best sound a podcaster could hope for. Podcast microphones tend to have big barrel-shaped bodies that create the impression of a heavy, sturdy, and high quality microphone. Whether or not a microphone like the Blue Yeti recording in cardioid mode actually captures better audio than a simple cardioid dynamic microphone like the Behringer Ultravoice or Shure SM58 is more questionable and highly dependent on the user.

Resources:

The Best Podcast Microphones on the Market
(https://www.thepodcasthost.com/equipment/the-best-podcasting-microphones-on-the-market/)
The Different Types Of Mics And Their Uses (https://www.gearank.com/articles/types-of-mics)
The Beginner's Guide to Recording Studio Microphones
(https://ehomerecordingstudio.com/types-of-microphones/)
RØDE Procaster - *On how to use and choose a microphone*
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S35OcGu2ULY)
Blue Yeti (http://www.bluemic.com/products/yeti/)

Multitrack Recording

If multiple people will appear on your podcast simultaneously in interview or discussion format, a multi-track recording device is a piece of equipment worth considering. Multi-track recording, just as it sounds, enables the podcaster to capture multiple tracks with separate microphones/devices. **Each participant needs their own microphone**, allowing each voice to be captured optimally and enabling the podcaster to edit each person's track separately.

Multi-track recording is a powerful way of minimizing noise and achieving more control over the final product. For example, if three people appear on the podcast with three different mics, a multi-track setup allows you to silence the other microphones in editing while one person is talking and edit and rearrange each track individually. In addition, different speakers could be given different positions in the stereo field, giving the recording a more three-dimensional quality.

Multitrack Mixers

If you want to record with a lot of microphones, a good multitrack mixer offers almost endless possibilities and a lot of control over sound quality during the recording. Many multitrack mixers can accommodate 8 to 12 inputs, each with separate volume controls and other features. You can record directly to a computer device using USB or save the tracks to an SD card, meaning that the mixer will not be tethered to a computer.

Hybrid Multitrack Recorders

Podcasters may consider alternatives to the big multitrack mixers in the form of a multitrack recorders that have both internal mics and inputs for external microphones and recording devices. **Most Ottoman History Podcast team members use recorders from the Zoom brand line of "handy recorders."** As the name suggests, these recorders can be handheld, run on either external or battery power, and have their own high quality microphones built in. In addition, they accept external microphone inputs. The Zoom H6, for example, has four inputs and the head microphone capsule can be easily removed and replaced with a capsule that adds an additional two inputs, making the recorder capable of true six-track recording. Especially for podcasters who need to be mobile, these hybrid recorders offer portability and versatility, allowing for a diverse range of capture.

Resources:

Test Voice Recordings on Different Devices
(http://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/2014/03/test-voice-recordings-on-different.html)
Ottoman History Podcast Equipment Guide
(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UbjMP5Qjsr5xAvvSmluCXW15im2E0nZ5nFbztW7eBZA/edit?usp=sharing)

Equipping Your Mobile Podcast
(http://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/p/podcasting-equipment.html)
Zoom H6
(https://www.zoom-na.com/products/field-video-recording/field-recording/h6-handy-recorder)
Multitrack Mixer/Interfaces
(http://www.soundonsound.com/reviews/multitrack-mixerinterfaces)

Other Considerations

In addition to the microphones and recording devices mentioned above, there are a few pieces of equipment and considerations that will be essential to recording your podcast.

In order to carry out your soundcheck and editing, you will need a reliable pair of **over-the-ear studio headphones**. They need not be terribly fancy or have sound-cancelling ability, but they should be good enough that you can hear the subtleties of the sound that is being captured. Earbuds are not recommended even during soundcheck, especially for novice podcasters, because you will not be able to hear what listeners with higher-quality headphones and speakers will inevitably be able to hear.

Small but important add-ons can also make a big difference. If you're using dynamic microphones, you should top them with foam windscreens. Even if these windscreens are not absolutely necessary for capturing human voice, they offer a layer of protection from the unwanted puffs of air that sometimes accompany human speech, reducing the potential for user error so that guests and participants may focus on the content of the conversation rather than the recording process. A power supply for your recording device will save lots of money in the long-run, and a device that allows you to be independent of a computer not only enables portability but also helps reduce the capture of background noise emanating from a laptop computer fan. Similarly microphone cables with **XLR connectors** will achieve a better and louder sound than cables with the more familiar ¼" connectors (though they cost the same).

When equipping your podcast, it is important to **resist the urge to economize** too much. Not all devices are created equal, and a little money invested in a recording device will go a long way towards improving the quality of what will hopefully become many hours of podcast audio in the future. This being said, the more expensive item is not necessarily the better item for your purposes, and it certainly is not necessarily the easier-to-use option in many cases. Likewise, it is probably more important to ensure that all microphones and cables in your multitrack setup are identical than it is to determine which mic to use. Mix-and-matching even really good mics might make your podcast sound awkward.

Lastly, experience is the key. Getting comfortable with a particular setup and settling on devices takes time. If you have access to equipment at a library or university recording studio, try out different options before spending a lot of money.

Editing Podcast Audio

When you've finished recording your podcast, the real work has in many ways just begun. Editing podcast audio and preparing it for publication can be as time consuming, and is usually more time consuming, than the recording itself. Moreover, audio editing skills are acquired only through considerable experience, making mastery of proper audio editing techniques one of the biggest barriers to entry in the podcast game. However, there are a range of software options out there to make your job much easier.

Destructive vs. Non-Destructive Editing

The basic distinction between different types of sound editing software is the distinction between destructive and non-destructive editing, and advanced programs can usually do both. Destructive editing involves directly changing the raw audio file. Most podcast audio will have to go through at least some layer of destructive editing, as certain changes and improvements cannot be carried out in a non-destructive manner. Every computer probably comes with one or multiple software interfaces that allows you to do destructive editing.

Non-destructive editing involves editing in an interface that records a variety of changes to a track of audio without actually changing the base file. Non-destructive audio editing allows you to easily change a variety of audio attributes, slice up, and move around blocks of sound without causing any changes or damage to the original audio. Likewise, non-destructive editing requires only saving and changing a small session file, meaning that you won't have to keep backing up your large .wav files in the course of editing your projects.

Non-destructive editing is highly recommended for serious audio editing, and it may be especially important for those are still learning the ropes. The last thing you want to do is lose hours of editing work because of a change you cannot undo. Worse yet, you could end up destroying the original audio if you do not have it backed up somewhere else. While more basic destructive editors can do the job for some audio, they are not recommended for long, involved, multitrack affairs.

Multitrack Editing

If you record multiple tracks, you will probably want to edit your podcast as multiple tracks. Multitrack editing is arguably more difficult and certainly more time consuming, but having control over the individual tracks makes some things a lot easier and will surely make the final product sound a lot better.

You can think of multitrack editing as individually modifying individual layers of the audio, but in fact what you are doing is playing multiple files at once and influencing how they sound individually. Good multitrack editors will have a non-destructive interface and allow you to edit

files while the tracks are playing. When you are done editing, you export your session as a "mixdown" into a single file, usually an MP3 or your preferred podcast file format.

Multitrack editing can become a headache. For example, one of the hazards of multitrack editing is accidentally dragging your blocks of audio so that they become permanently out of sync. To minimize the risk of this, make sure to drag all audio at once. If your tracks get out of sync and you can't undo, you can minimize this impact by going to the very end of your session and dragging all of your tracks so that they are once again flush.

Audio Editing Software

There is plenty of audio editing software out there, but many good softwares may cost you as much or more than your recording equipment. Before committing to a software make sure to try out a number of options. Most programs can be downloaded in a trial version before purchase.

Audacity (http://www.audacityteam.org/)

Audacity is the **best free option** for audio editing. It is completely open source and works well with PC, Mac, and Linux operating systems. For basic editing tasks and small files, you probably do not need anything more than Audacity. But the software does a lot more than just basic visual audio editing. It can accommodate multitrack projects and comes with a truly impressive set of effects for a piece of software that is completely free.

One fatal disadvantage of Audacity is that it is **not non-destructive**. That means you will have to proceed with great caution to ensure that your audio does not get distorted or irrevocably damaged. In addition, Audacity does not allow for on-the-fly editing, i.e. you cannot play your audio and edit your audio at the same time. Many podcasters use Audacity, but if you have a lot of tracks or editing to deal with, especially if you will make a lot of small cuts, Audacity will become the source of endless frustration.

Adobe Audition (http://www.adobe.com/products/audition.html)

If Audacity is the user-friendly free option, Adobe Audition is the **most versatile and user-friendly expensive option**. Audition has both a non-destructive multitrack editing mode as well as a destructive audio editing interface for doing detailed work on single tracks of sound. Audition is descended from a legendary piece of audio editing software called Cool Edit Pro, which was developed for PC during the 1990s and had all the basic capabilities for multitrack editing that a podcast could need today.

The big drawback to Adobe Audition is its price. Currently Adobe markets this software as part of the Creative Cloud suite of software. Adobe's CC software include other useful tools such as Photoshop and the Premier Pro video editing software. If you're doing video, Audition's seamless integration with Premier Pro can be a big advantage. However, at nearly $20 a month

for Audition or $50 for the whole suite, Adobe Audition is **comically expensive**. Fortunately, many university faculty will find that their institution provides licenses for Audition and other Adobe CC products. It may also be possible to purchase or obtain an older single-payment license of Adobe Audition, but this could still run in the hundreds of dollars.

Hindenburg Journalist (https://hindenburg.com/products/hindenburg-journalist)

One piece of software that has most of the basic functions of Adobe Audition at a fraction of the price is Hindenburg Journalist. It is nowhere near as versatile and slick as Audition, but it is a non-destructive multitrack editor that has good features for podcasters looking to use a software into which they can record directly.

Pro Tools (http://www.avid.com/pro-tools)

Pro Tools is low-end audio editing software and is a favorite of Mac users. While it is a non-destructive audio editing software, Pro Tools is more geared towards music production than editing long form multitrack podcasts.

Reaper (http://www.reaper.fm/purchase.php)

A non-destructive multitrack editor that is even cheaper than Hindenburg is Reaper, and like the other programs above, it will do the job. However, podcasters may be frustrated with the rudimentary quality of some features and the inability to slice and drag audio blocks with absolute precision.

GarageBand (http://www.apple.com/mac/garageband/)

GarageBand is a pretty impressive piece of software that might come free on your Mac, but it is generally not a viable option for advanced podcast editing.

Resources:

"Editing audio files: Non-destructive vs. Destructive editing"
(http://www.audiorecording.me/editing-audio-files-non-destructive-vs-destructive-editing.html)
"7 reasons I'm switching from Audacity to Audition (and why you shouldn't)"
(https://theaudacitytopodcast.com/tap106-7-reasons-im-switching-from-audacity-to-audition-and-why-you-shouldnt/)

Social Media

Like it or not, social media has changed the way information is consumed, and to an alarming degree, much of **internet traffic currently flows through sites like Facebook and Twitter**. In other words, social media *mediates* an increasingly large percentage of internet traffic. The drawbacks of this development and the participation in social media are too numerous to list here, but if you are serious about reaching a public audience, you will need your content to circulate well on social media one way or another.

Building a Social Media Presence

There are many ways of building a social media presence that would be irresponsible for a scholar. Earning a few retweets from or scoring a few points in a heated exchange with a prominent person or organization with a large following may be a shortcut to adding some followers in a hurry. But in the long-term, building a social media presence is about **constantly generating good social media content**, and the type of content you generate will determine the size and quality of your audience.

Many social media accounts specialize in curating and disseminating content such as articles and websites from the web. People will begin to follow your posts if you are regularly bringing content of their interest to their attention. An even more effective way of building a social media following is by generating **genuinely new content** or at least adding something to the content you share. For example, if your social media account is devoted to sharing literature, try adding good summaries or commentary on the literature you share. If history is your game, try digging up maps and images from here and there and providing useful captions for those images. Social media is a big gray area in terms of copyrights, but be careful not to share anything that is beyond your right to share.

Social Media Platforms

New social media platforms are constantly being developed. Usually they do not go anywhere; once in awhile they take off. Getting in early is always helpful when trying to establish a strong social media presence. But this does not mean you have to join every new kind of social media. Just be on the lookout for social media that work for your personality and the content of your project.

Facebook

While many types of web content are reached primarily through Google searches, **Facebook is increasingly the dominant source of web traffic**. But the relationship between Facebook and web traffic is complicated. If you operate a small website with no Facebook presence, you might notice that a sizeable percentage of your traffic comes from Facebook, but if you operate a

site with a large Facebook following, you will find that a majority of your traffic, even the vast majority of your traffic, is flowing through Facebook. There is no doubt about it; getting shares on Facebook is the best way to boost traffic for your website. However, in building a Facebook following to share your content, you expend a tremendous amount of effort that makes your project in turn more deeply wedded to Facebook.

Some media outfits have begun to take a radical approach to generating content through Facebook by making Facebook the place where their project lives. For example, Al Jazeera + (AJ+) hosts all of its videos directly on Facebook, taking advantage of the Facebook algorithm, which privileges Facebook content over external links, to rise as a leading source of short news segments and commentary on the medium.

Promoting a podcast project on Facebook can take many forms. One is to simply use your personal account as a public account. The more common approach is to **launch a page for your podcast** project and share content there and gain followers, usually by initially inviting people you know to "like" and "follow." The goal is to get Facebook users to react to and share your content so that it will circulate to more users. You can also pay Facebook to display your posts to more users.

Although Facebook was initially a great way for independent media to reach new audiences, the monetization of Facebook has resulted in an increasing amount of page space being dedicated to sponsored posts of corporations with large budgets. This means that a lot of what you see on Facebook is basically advertisements for products related to searches you've made on Google or Amazon. For media, what it means is that big media outfits and aggressive advertisers like the New York Times and the upstart Vice network of websites are saturating Facebook. Of course, each person's Facebook timeline is different, and so it may be easier to reach some people than others using Facebook. Though Facebook is still a "necessary evil" in terms of generating traffic, it is much harder to amass a large Facebook following than it used to be, and initially, you may want to exploit other narrower but more targeted channels of promotion such as old fashioned academic listservs.

Twitter

Alongside Facebook, Twitter is a dominant social media platform. Its hallmark is the strict character limit, which makes it a great place for sharing short-form commentary and links to news and other web content. The downside of Twitter for podcasters, which is true but less true for Facebook as well, is that most Twitter users do not login with the expectation that they might possibly be sucked into a 30-minute podcast episode. If you can amass a Twitter following, it will definitely help generate some clicks for your podcast website, which may lead to followers, but **do not expect a large amount of plays and downloads to flow through Twitter**.

Instagram

Instagram has emerged out of the lens of the camera phone to become one of the most beloved among social media platforms. Like Twitter and Facebook, you can make an account for your project and gain followers by posting nice images, with a bonus for clever captions. The downside of Instagram for promoting a podcast or another such website is that your Instagram posts cannot contain links, meaning that there's no chance of you posting a picture that will immediately direct your followers to your podcast page.

Snapchat

The key to the success of Snapchat is that content is quick and ephemeral. Many public figures and institutions operate successful Snapchat accounts, but I do not know how Snapchat can be used to generate actual traffic for a podcast. Like Instagram, it can be used to generate targeted attention and engagement.

Social Media Plugins

The websites and hosting services you use will usually come with social media tools that allow you to quickly or automatically share the content you post to a social media account. While these shares will have low reach in comparison with more thoughtful and specially crafted posts, using social media plugins of various kinds is one way to develop your project's social media presence without investing too much time.

Social Media is a Double-Edged Sword

Many scholarly podcasters will be committed to the idea of open and free information and will see themselves as educators on the internet. Therefore, social media is a critical method of outreach to a broader public with a passing interest in the humanities. Remember that whether or not you are making any money, any of the social media companies you work with do make money off your posts, and this is their primary motive. In using social media to promote your podcast, remember that the goal is actually getting people to download and listen to your content. While this sometimes means doing other things on social media to build a following, do not lose sight of your main priorities. On the other hand, you may find that podcasting and other forms of social media engagement are quite complementary. Posting through your social media accounts allows you to interact with your audience, learn their interests and reactions, and see where and who they are. This is as important as finding a platform to share your content, since it is by recoding great podcasts that you will ultimately build your following.

Resources:

How Al Jazeera's AJ+ Became One of the Biggest Video Publishers on Facebook
(http://variety.com/2015/digital/news/how-al-jazeeras-aj-became-one-of-the-biggest-video-publishers-on-facebook-1201553333/)
Who Controls Your Facebook Feed
(http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/cover_story/2016/01/how_facebook_s_news_feed_algorithm_works.html)
10 Commandments of Twitter for Academics
(http://www.chronicle.com/article/10-Commandments-of-Twitter-for/131813)

Costs, Funding, and Monetization

Whatever the nature of your project, podcasting will probably cost you more time and stress than money. But in conceiving your podcast project, it is helpful to be aware of what costs money, what doesn't, where to find possible sources of funding, and the realistic potential for monetizing your project.

The Costs of Running a Podcast

There is no way to podcast right and podcast for free. But minimizing your costs is one of the best ways to ensure that your podcast will be long-lived. The costs of running a podcast include hosting and other web-related fees, equipment, software, promotion, and more. Here is a breakdown.

Web Address - Custom Url

A custom url is not an absolute necessity, but it **one of the most affordable ways of helping to brand your podcast**. A url is renewable and is assessed an annual fee. Often you can pay multiple years up front to earn a discount.

Some urls can be as little as a few dollars. When choosing your url and host, try to settle on something **under $20 per year**. Some WordPress hosts and blogging services will allow you to integrate a custom domain through their service, though you might end up paying more this way than if you purchase your domain independently.

Media Hosting

The cost of media hosting has dramatically decreased over time, and as explained in the publishing guide above, there are a number of viable options. I recommend settling on an affordable media host that allows for **unlimited bandwidth** and a good amount of data upload (if not unlimited) per month if your plan is to have a continuously running podcast.

By way of example, a SoundCloud Unlimited Pro plan currently costs **just under $100 per year**. Before signing on to a hosting plan that will cost you more than this, make sure you understand the benefits that your hosting comes with.

If you are operating a WordPress site using wordpress.org, you will also need hosting for your site and its associated content. While there are many options for under $10 a month, typical bargain WP hosts might not accommodate the types of media and amount of bandwidth you need for your podcast. Read the details carefully before assuming your WP hosting will cover podcast media hosting.

If you use Blogger or another free platform that handles media enclosures, you may not have to pay for additional hosting beyond the media hosting for podcast files, since Google has a fairly generous storage allowance for website related content. If you post a lot of images, you may need to supplement your Blogger site with a Google Drive subscription or find another means of hosting your additional media.

If you are using wordpress.com for your blog, $2.99 per month is the current price for a basic site with limited customization and 6gb of storage and a whopping $8.25 per month is necessary for advanced customization and 13gb of storage.

Equipment

The cost of equipping your podcast will vary widely depending on your format and concern with audio quality. A serviceable **USB microphone will cost at least $40-100** and the best ones cost $200 or more. If you are using multitrack mixer or external recording device away from the laptop you have more options. Decent **dynamic XLR microphones start at just $20-30** and go into the hundreds. Cords will be $5-20 apiece.

Decent multitrack mixers with at least 4 inputs start at about $50 and a very good one that will do everything you can imagine will cost $300-400. Hybrid "handy recorders" by Zoom discussed above range between $200-500. The **Zoom H6 costs about $350**, the H5 $269, and the classic H4n about $200.

Studio **headphones** cost $40-100. But do not go overboard on headphones unless you will use them for other purposes or are doing detailed sound work and music.

Small incidental costs might include SD cards for storage, disposable batteries, various cables, microphone windscreens, mounts, or stands, and hard drives for keeping your raw audio files. You may also want to need a sizeable cloud storage account to ensure that your data, especially unreleased material, is not lost.

Editing Software

It is possible to **edit your podcast for free using Audacity**. Basic non-destructive audio editing software starts at around $40 and can cost in the hundreds of dollars. The **Adobe Audition CC subscription costs $20 per month**, with the whole CC suite costing around $50 per month. The bad news of the subscription model is obvious. Adobe Audition would cost you a fortune in the long-run. The good news is that some universities subscribe, and if you do need to give it a try, you can always cancel after your trial run or after realizing the $20 per month is simply not worth the cost.

Promotion

If you promote your podcast on Facebook or another medium, you may end up spending considerably more. Facebook allows you to both promote a page as well as promote individual posts you make on that page. However, before engaging in heavy promotion, experiment to see if the results justify the cost. *As Facebook has changed, Ottoman History Podcast has reduced the amount it spends on advertising due to diminishing returns on ads. However, our reach and traffic through Facebook is still increasing overall.*

The Example of Ottoman History Podcast

Ottoman History Podcast releases 50-60 podcasts per year on average. Currently, the approximate annual cost of running Ottoman History Podcast, including one full set of our typical podcasting equipment is:

$10	Annual Cost for ottomanhistorypodcast.com, registered with Enom in 2011
$95	SoundCloud Unlimited Pro subscription
$24	Google Drive Subscription at $1.99/month for 100gb
$350	Zoom H6
$80	4 Behringer Ultravoice Dynamic Cardioid Microphones
$40	4 XLR Cables
$10	Pack of microphone windscreens
$40	Studio Headphones
$13	1 32gb SD card for Zoom H6
$150	Facebook Promotion ($2.50-3 per episode)

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$812   For year of hosting, typical set of equipment, and average promotion costs

As you can see, a good set of podcasting equipment costs more than the actual operating costs of a podcast in a given year, if you exclude time and labor. Another hidden cost here is editing software. Currently I use Adobe Audition, but I have been able to access this software via my employer. The monthly cost of Adobe Audition ($20) means that you could spend more on editing software than hosting for a podcast if you pay full price for a good program.

In addition, members of our podcasting team are responsible for obtaining their own equipment. Their methods vary; one of our team members uses the SOAS Radio studio to record. Others have purchased less expensive equipment, although meeting our minimum equipment requirements will still cost around $350. But many of our contributors have recorded dozens of podcasts, meaning that the amount spent on equipment per episode is not necessarily very high.

Funding and Monetization

Most podcasts do not make money, but some of the most successful podcasters earn enough to support a household income. There are many ways to earn money through your podcast, but charging money for downloads is not the best one. Here are some types of funding you might seek and where to look.

Startup Costs

If you are looking for a way to fund your initial startup costs for equipment and the like, a good way of raising a small amount of money might be crowdsourcing campaign. For small amounts of money, a crowdsourced fundraiser through a site like **GoFundMe** (https://www.gofundme.com/) might bring in a little money, though you may end up getting donations mainly from friends, family, and colleagues for the initial funds. If you want to raise a lot of money for a good and potentially monetizable podcast idea on a site like Kickstarter (https://www.kickstarter.com/) you'll need a good promotional video to entice your prospective investors.

Scholars based at academic institutions may be surprised to find that there are funds on campus that could be used towards the initial cost of launching a podcast. Since the equipment and hosting fees will only cost hundreds of dollars, there may be money available without too many strings attached.

Sustained Revenue

Podcasts come with continuous costs and thus if you are looking to generate some revenue and at least break even, you will need to look to a reliable source of money.

Most websites earn revenue through advertisements. Google AdSense (https://www.google.com/adsense/) advertisements can be placed on your website and will generate a very small amount of income. The most basic ads are not too intrusive. You can also use your podcast itself as a place for advertising by attracting paid sponsors. As mentioned in the publishing guide, the podcast hosting service acast also allows podcasters to share in revenue. The amount of advertising revenue you can generate will be relative to the amount of traffic your site receives. While ads like Google AdSense can be added and removed at your leisure, do some research before committing to individual sponsors.

The new way that podcasters are funding their projects is through donations. You can solicit donations simply by adding a PayPal donate button to your website. However, the fastest growing way of pulling in donations is with **Patreon** (https://www.patreon.com/), which allows supporters to make one-time or monthly donations to your project. One example of a small scholarly podcast that uses Patreon to cover its operating costs is Sean's Russia Blog (https://www.patreon.com/seansrussiablog).

Some academic podcasters work through their **institutions** for support. In addition to covering operating costs, institutions may be able to provide recording spaces and technical support. Plus, a podcast released through an institution may be eligible for listing in the **iTunesU** podcast listings, where universities post lectures and other educational materials. For an example of a successful podcast supported by a university, check out the 15 Minute History Podcast at UT-Austin (http://15minutehistory.org/).