

Audio podcast service in public libraries : a schematic study to utilize in public libraries in Egypt

Review – English Summary

Heba Nasr

Library Specialist, Information Technology Unit, Ministry of Justice, Egypt

heba_nasr87@outlook.com

Copyright (c) 2025,
Heba Nasr



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Abstract

The study aimed to explore how Egyptian public libraries could benefit from podcasting services and to develop audio content for the Egypt Public Libraries system, accessible through digital streaming platforms. The study aimed to accomplish various secondary objectives, including identifying and evaluating podcast initiatives in both foreign and Arab public libraries, examining how Egyptian public libraries could leverage podcasting technology to enhance their service quality, establishing standards for evaluating podcasts in public libraries, and identifying the essential skills required for librarians and information specialists to create and manage podcasting platforms.

The researcher employed a descriptive survey approach to analyse the present implementation of this service in foreign public libraries and to investigate strategies for incorporating it within the Arab community. Various data collection tools were used, including direct observation to assess the feasibility of implementing these applications in Egyptian public libraries, along with a checklist as a primary tool to evaluate podcasting services in Egypt's public libraries. The study recommended raising public awareness of podcasting technology in information institutions to maximize its benefits, organizing roundtable discussions to explore skill development for librarians in the digital and AI era, and creating job opportunities that integrate library science with podcast production.

The study also emphasized the importance of participating in local and international events and conferences to stay updated on podcasting advancements, advising managers to use the checklist to assess service quality, standardizing new job titles related to podcasting, and adjusting the job title of content creators working as library specialists to "Podcast Librarian" to position Egypt's public libraries at the forefront of adopting global naming conventions.

Keywords

Podcast, public libraries, Egypt

1. The Rise of Web 2.0 and Podcasting in Libraries:

- The study emphasizes that the "information revolution and Web 2.0" have profoundly transformed communication and interaction, leading to "the greatest impact on the field of libraries and information." This necessitates libraries adopting "Web 2.0 technologies" to enhance web-based services and encourage user participation, leading to the concept of "Library 2.0."
- Podcasting is identified as a "modern technological tool" and an "application of Web 2.0," which has brought about a "media revolution" by offering a new way for individuals to engage with digital media.
- Libraries, recognizing this potential, have begun leveraging podcasting to provide innovative services, "overcoming the spatial and temporal barriers" and offering 24/7 access to content.

2. Benefits and Applications of Podcasting in Libraries:

- Podcasting allows libraries to offer "a new method of communication between the library and users," including "storytelling for children, broadcasting lectures, book reviews, and audiobooks," as well as "offering various training courses."
- It serves as a "useful and effective tool for learning," facilitating "distance learning and self-learning at the user's preferred pace."
- Crucially, it provides a means to "serve the blind and people with special needs," promoting accessibility and inclusivity in information provision.
- The service also helps "enhance the role of the user in enriching digital content."

3. International and Regional Landscape of Podcasting in Public Libraries:

- **International Success:** Many foreign public libraries have successfully adopted podcasting. Examples include:
 - The New York Public Library podcast.
 - Des Moines Public Library podcast.
 - Deerfield Public Library Podcast.
 - Potsdam Public Library podcast.
 - Toronto Public Library podcast.
 - Cook Memorial Public Library District podcast.
- **Statistical Evidence of Growth (International):** An ALA survey indicated a significant increase in public libraries offering podcasts, from "15% in 2018 to 30% in 2021."
- The New York Public Library witnessed "over 500,000 downloads for its podcast episodes in 2022."
- Los Angeles County Library exceeded "200,000 listeners in 2021."
- 70% of public library podcast listeners use platforms like Spotify and Apple Podcasts.
- The majority of public library podcast listeners (ALA data) are youth aged "18-34."

- **Arab World Context:** While foreign libraries have embraced this technology, Arab public libraries have historically "suffered from a lack of optimal investment in electronic broadcasting technology." However, the study notes a recent acceleration in adoption by Arab libraries, citing examples such as:
 - King Fahd National Library (Saudi Arabia) - "Homeland Library podcast."
 - King Abdulaziz Public Library (Saudi Arabia) - "Knowledge Dialogues podcast."
 - Abdul Hameed Shoman Library (Jordan) - "(S) podcast."
 - Sharjah Public Library (UAE) - "Here is Sharjah podcast."
 - Library of Alexandria (Egypt) - "Library of Alexandria podcast."
- **Egypt's Pioneer Role:** The study highlights that "the Egyptian Public Libraries System has produced five podcast programs as the first public library in Egypt to apply the podcasting service," available on Spotify (MPL Podcasts).

4. Key Challenges and the Need for Strategic Planning:

- The core problem identified is the "urgent need to invest in broadcasting technology in libraries," especially given the ongoing developments in the digital environment.
- The study seeks to address "the absence of appropriate information sources" and the need for libraries to be "the focus of attention for users."
- The research aims to "investigate the possibility of applying and benefiting public libraries" from podcasting, especially as a "developed form of current awareness service," marketing, and promotion.

5. Methodology and Evaluation Standards:

- The study employs a "descriptive analytical survey approach" to assess the current situation and user opinions.
- Data collection tools include: "Direct Observation" of foreign public library podcast services, "Structured Interviews" with officials from the Egyptian Public Libraries System, and a "Checklist" for evaluating electronic audio broadcasting services.
- **Evaluation Standards:** The study identifies four international standards for podcast evaluation:
 - ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) and ALA (American Library Association) standards, focusing on informational content, format, validity, and bias.
 - Amal Hamdy's criteria (2009), which include content, purpose, coverage, accuracy, bias, recency, organization, copyright, target audience, accessibility, and cost.
 - Austria's criteria, focusing on speaker's intonation, pacing, audio quality, and use of music effects.
 - Eller Rockman F. general criteria, covering informational content (purpose, trustworthiness, author credibility, accuracy, recency, relevance), and narrator's voice.
- These standards are used to develop a "standardized review list" for assessing podcast services in public libraries.

6. Proposed Framework for Egyptian Public Libraries:

- The study aims to "plan for the creation of broadcast files for the Egyptian public libraries system."
- It emphasizes the need to "identify the skills required for librarians and information specialists to prepare and manage platforms for providing the service."
- It proposes "planning and establishing a broadcast channel for the Egyptian public libraries system."
- The study also calls for the "amendment of the functional title for librarians and information specialists to become 'Podcast Librarian,'" to align with global trends. This suggests a new specialized role for librarians.

7. Recommendations for Future Implementation:

- **For Arab Universities/Library & Information Science Departments:** Direct attention to and raise awareness about podcasting in information facilities.
- Offer "summer courses" or specialized courses in modern technologies to open "new job opportunities for library and information specialists."
- **For Library Associations & Information Associations:** Organize "roundtables to discuss how to develop the skills of librarians" in the digital age and AI.
- "Open new job opportunities for library and information specialists and integrate them with jobs in the podcast industry."
- Conduct "workshops and training programs" on podcast creation and management.
- "Create a directory for podcast files" in the library and information field.
- Emphasize privacy and digital content protection through legislation.
- "Establish a unified Egyptian standard for evaluating electronic audio broadcasting service" in libraries.
- **For Libraries and Information Institutions:** Clearly define the "target audience" for podcasts (students, researchers, general public) to tailor content.
- Highlight the role of librarians and "utilize their talents and skills" in podcasting.
- Provide "necessary training for staff" on recording equipment, editing, content preparation, and communication skills.
- "Integrate with social media" to promote episodes and encourage community interaction.
- Analyze "listener data to improve content" and understand preferences.
- Foster "community partnerships and collaboration with educational institutions" to offer diverse cultural and scientific content.
- **For Egyptian Public Libraries System:** "Continue podcast programs."
- "Develop the studio facilities" at the Zawya El Hamra branch.
- "Participate in events, conferences, and conventions" related to podcasting.

- "Adopt new functional titles specific to the podcast industry," such as "Podcast Librarian," and "be the first to adopt these global designations."
- "Establish and approve an audio broadcasting team" to record Egyptian Public Libraries' holdings for an audio library.

8. Future Research Directions:

- Experimental studies on implementing podcasting in libraries for the "visually impaired" and "deaf and mute" communities, focusing on accessibility and special needs.
- A field study on electronic audio/visual broadcasting in "school libraries," exploring its impact on self-learning and content development.
- An applied study on "creating an electronic directory for podcast files" in the library and information field.

Most Important Ideas/Facts

- **Podcasting as a Transformative Tool:** Podcasting is identified as a crucial Web 2.0 application that enables libraries to extend their reach, provide 24/7 access to information, and engage users in new, interactive ways.
- **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** The potential of podcasting to serve "the blind and people with special needs" is a significant benefit highlighted by the study, aligning with principles of universal information access.
- **Global vs. Regional Disparity (and recent bridging):** While foreign libraries have been early adopters and demonstrated significant growth in podcasting (e.g., millions of downloads, high youth engagement), Arab libraries were initially lagging but are now rapidly catching up, with Egypt's Public Libraries System being a notable pioneer.
- **Standardized Evaluation:** The study's focus on international evaluation standards provides a concrete framework for assessing the quality and effectiveness of library podcast services.
- **New Professional Roles:** The proposed "Podcast Librarian" title signifies a new, specialized role within the library profession, reflecting the evolving demands of the digital information landscape. This indicates a shift in required skills for librarians.
- **Data-Driven Improvement:** The recommendation to "analyze listener data to improve content" underscores the importance of a data-driven approach to service development and user engagement.

In conclusion, this study provides a robust argument and a detailed roadmap for Egyptian public libraries to embrace podcasting, not just as a trend, but as a fundamental shift in service delivery that aligns with global digital advancements and directly addresses user needs in the 21st century.