

Podcasts and RSS Feeds in Teaching

Andreas Bischoff, <http://prt.fernuni-hagen.de/~bischoff/>

To provide students instantly with information about updates in asynchronous changeable media like wikis and blogs RRS feeds are a suitable solution. We are using a Wiki based environment to prepare our online seminars. For announcements of events like online tests or meetings Wiki based tools are inconvenient for learners and teachers. To avoid extra effort, an automatically announcement of all user was needed. We have integrated a RRS (Really Simple Syndication) feed to our Wiki [1]. RSS feeds for notification were also added to the news page on the PRT web site [2] and the news page of the university [3]. A RSS file is a computer readable XML based description of any changeable web content. Especially for highly dynamic changeable news sites, a RSS feed becomes an interface to poll the changes automatically with a so called feedreader.

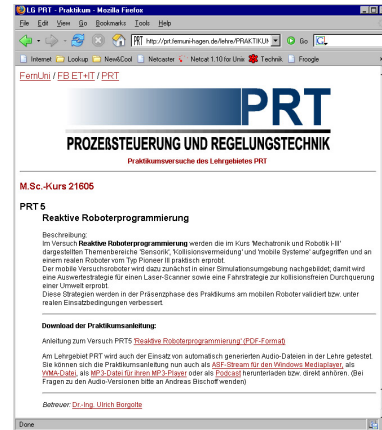


Figure 1: Podcast based teaching material, Reactive robot programming

Audio based teaching material has a long tradition in distant teaching. The upcoming Podcasting euphoria reestablish the focus on audio based material. The podcast technology, which is basically an extension of existing RSS techniques for deployment of audio (and video) data makes the distribution of audio based teaching material very convenient for the users. The word 'Podcast' was derived from iPod and broadcast. In a technical sense a Podcast is nothing more than a MP3 file and a XML based RSS-Newsfeed meta description. But for users, with no or little knowledge about file formats and meta data, a Podcast is a very convenient way to synchronize their audio data to their mobile devices or to create an own Podcast. Nevertheless the production of audio based teaching material is time consuming and expensive. Since the teaching material at University of Hagen will be generated out of a XML based source format (FUXML) in the future, an automatically conversion to audio would be helpful. To evaluate these techniques in teaching, text based course material was automatic converted to speech by the use of text to speech (TTS) technology. Since math containing material is not very suitable to this task a more information technology based course (a manual for a robotics practice) was chosen as an example course to establish a Podcast service in PRT's teaching [4].

[1] <http://prt-i33.fernuni-hagen.de/~bischoff/feed/onlineseminarWS20062007.xml>

[2] <http://prt.fernuni-hagen.de/~bischoff/feed/prt-aktuell.rss>

[3] <http://prt.fernuni-hagen.de/~bischoff/feed/FU-aktuell.rss>

[4] Reactive robot programming, M.Sc. courseware 21605
<http://prt.fernuni-hagen.de/lehre/PRAKTIKUM/KURZ/roboter.html>