**Podcast Studies: Practice into Theory, Theory into Practice,**

**Introduction:** Academic podcasting has increasingly become identified and adopted as a mode of scholarly practice - by lecturers, researchers, administrators and students - offering a wealth of creative and intellectual potential. Increasingly prevalent in adjacent disciplines such as radio and sound studies, media and cultural studies academic podcasting is also being utilised outside of media/humanities, along with being deployed as a platform for cross-disciplinary collaboration. Our discussions and collaborations across the burgeoning network of podacademics have revealed the medium’s value and significance in a wide range of academic contexts in multifaceted forms. These include:

the creative and intellectual potential of sound, the capacity to distribute knowledge beyond academic audiences, as a means of collaboration, as a methodological research tool, as a method of peer review, and in the potential for diversification of voices and perspectives. In the context of Podcast Studies as discipline the understandings, uses, and motivations behind academic podcasting is a multilayered need of a greater analysis and schematisation. Furthermore, central to the study of podcasting in an academic context must be a consideration of how podcasting practice (in the broadest understanding of that notion) feeds into conceptual thinking about knowledge production and communication. In other words, how do academics theorise their podcasting experience in light of the praxis - enaction, realisation or application of ideas through practice - that the medium affords?

We are inviting practitioner academics to contribute to these debates through a chapter in an edited collection. The overarching thematic questions that will structure the book include:

* How has podcasting provoked questions for researcher/practitioners with regards to the relationship between theory and practice?
* How does podcasting production (in its multifaceted dimensions such as recording, editing, scriptwriting, interviewing, marketing etc) facilitate developments, transformations or affirmations with regards to the communication of academic research/concepts?
* How has your practice created new methodologies of research in terms of the foreground of sound communication but also in other areas of podcasting creation?
* How has the distribution and consumption of podcasting pose questions about the structures of knowledge mediation within and without academia?
* How should this appreciation of the interrelationship between theory and practice structure the parameters of academic Podcast Studies?

**We are, in turn, interested in submission of abstracts that can be aligned with but are not limited to the follow potential sections:**

**Practices**

Recording and the collection audio data

Editing and the shaping of meaning

Podcasting practices in relation to other forms of media production

Production cultures (beyond economic considerations)

**Technologies**

Theorising podcast technologies

Podcasting interrelationship with media technologies and histories?

Use of music, speech, effects

Podcasting and questions of genre

**Conversations**

Podcast and the use of Interviews

Concept of the academic dialogue

Podcasting as Oral History

Podcasting and its use as peer review

**Narratives**

Podcast’s contribution to dramaturgy, storytelling,

Non-fiction narrativisation

The practice of transmedia

Scripting and/or performance

**Audiences**

Building audiences

Interactions between hosts and audiences

Listening as a practice

Theorising ideas such as intimacy, immediacy, community

Independent vs networked production & distribution

**Accessibility, Diversity**

Identities and voices

Indigenous podcasting & decolonizing ‘the airwaves’ and research

Accessibility practices & issues

BIPOC/BAME

LGBTQ+ podcasting

Women in podcasting

**Politics and Society**

Podcasting and discourses of democracy

Ethics of sound recording

Political economy of Podcasting

Podcasting and the public sphere

Podcasting as part of digital media culture

**Pedagogies**

Academic podcasting as pedagogy

Teaching through sound rather than text

Podcasting and the diversification of learning practices

Ethnography of podcast practices

**Summary Notes**

In formulating the idea for this book the editors are seeking to reckon with the question ‘why podcast?’ particularly from an academic point of view. For Lori Beckstead, this can be understood through the lens of the multiple, interlinking identities which tap into podcasting as practice and concept: as an amateur enthusiast podcasting about one of her favourite pastimes (sewing); as an educator teaching podcast production and storytelling; and as a researcher exploring the characteristics and affordances of podcasting as a medium. For amateur enthusiasts, podcasting affords a robust platform for building community, through the connections made with guests as well as with listeners who, through the act of listening, become a participant in that community. Podcasting’s propensity to engender dialogue and, as many argue, authenticity, permits Lori to explore with her fellow sewing enthusiasts why they sew and what it means to create through sewing. In other words, podcasting allows for the conversational and discursive practice of meaning making: What understanding about creating through sewing can the community built around this podcast co-construct?

For Dario, the avenue into podcasting was not from a traditionally sound-oriented practice, pedagogy or radio background. Instead, podcasting was an avenue through which his academic role as a film lecturer and researcher found a new outlet. Co-creating and co-hosting *The Cinematologists* podcast offered a forum for conversation about his primary interest in cinema. The 2014/15 podcast explosion was the context for an interest in freeform conversation and the in-depth production of knowledge that emerged from the podcast space which was not bounded by the strictures of traditional academic forums. As Dario’s podcasting practice developed through an autodidactic process of learning sound recording, editing, distribution and marketing skills, this engendered an interest not only in the possibilities of practice-led research and the creative possibilities of the podcasting, but also the epistemological affordances of sound mediation relative to text and image.

For both Lori and Dario the question of ‘why podcast?’ has become a more urgent and essential element of their academic lives as it has taken a more prominent role in the type of scholarship they are interested in producing. This derives from the self-reflexive questions that podcasting practice raises in terms of its actual and potential role in academia, and wider questions about the nature of communication and knowledge in the contemporary media, technological, social and political landscape.

Until relatively recently, when discussing the idea of podcasting in academia, it was still largely understood as something on the fringes, even gimmicky, part of an endless series of unnecessary digital addendums to the serious business of writing journal articles and books. Indeed, in this context the question is put framed in a somewhat different way: podcasting, why?

As podcasting has increasingly been incorporated into the structures of mainstream media, discussion regarding the motivations of podcasters is increasingly reflected through economic discourses. Driven primarily from the US and the formation of podcasting as a media industry, neoliberal assumptions and the podcasting-as-business mantra ostensibly serve to reduce every other element of the process to its logic: subject-matter, production values, audience building and broadly the individual’s reason for engaging with the medium. The question “why podcast?”, from an academic standpoint, should look to critique these assumptions and engage with pleasure and purpose which are neither singular nor static.

The practice of podcasting, in all its multi-dimensional technological and formal facets, thus offers a unique entrypoint into thinking about theory through practice and vice versa. For example, the very process of learning how to record and edit, to shape sound to create aural affect, to hear one’s own voice over and over again, and recognise that meaning is not only expressed through language content but also through the beauties and idiosyncrasies of oral texture, intonation, hesitation and all the other vocal mechanics of speech. Because of the relationship between thought, text and speech becomes a much more open area of scrutiny. Furthermore, and rather paradoxically, for a medium the ontology of which is dependent on digital technologies, the recording and listening spaces arguably reignite the pleasures and possibilities of direct communication. The decoupling from the exteriority of screens, to the interiority of sounds and voices, reflects the often-claimed intimacy that defines the podcast experience.

The question of why one podcasts is also, of course, accompanied by the vexed question of “what is a podcast?” -- still at the forefront of academic explorations of the medium. What is a podcast -- beyond a basic definition which might include words such as digital audio, episodic, and downloadable -- and what are the characteristics that invoke what our colleague Richard Berry calls “podcastness”? And what is the shared understanding of podcasting that a community of practitioners, scholars, and researchers can co-create? Undoubtedly, the attractiveness of podcasting also derives from its open access sensibility, relative affordability and high accessibility. In this sense it holds advantages over TV, Film and Radio in offering an attainable starting point for media creativity; available and free-to-use distribution mechanisms augment the potential to carve out an audience beyond the confines of academia but also on one’s own terms.

Yet assumptions of accessibility is something that needs to be interrogated, which is one of the key aims of this edited collection. Podcast Studies research should undoubtedly not just promote but actively advocate for the diversification of voices as well as a globalised, pluralistic approach to the development of the medium. The notion that podcasting is utilised to address niche interests, ignored histories, and silence political identities can not be assumed, it needs to be at the forefront of concern.

We are interested in a range of questions with regards to how we conceptualise academic podcasting and the connections between theory and practice. How might podcasting as a specific form of media practice have been instigated or driven by a presupposed theoretical context or hypothesis? How do podcasters, either implicitly or explicitly, explore this from within the medium? How has podcasting instigated a reappraisal of one’s approach to knowledge, communication or our thoroughly mediated identities? But this goes beyond the simple idea that podcast producers want to ‘get their message out’ to a wider audience (although this might be part of it). The depth and complexities of producer motivations is not only an under-researched area and this is perhaps because there is a sense that it is somewhat taken for granted.

The uptake of podcasting has also potentially engendered new communities in which the practices of creation draw together affiliations offering a range of new insights with regards to podcasting itself of wider disciplinary fields. Podcast Studies is at a moment of exciting potential, where its parameters and aims are ready to be developed by a range of associated scholars who are not only pondering the meanings and affordances of the medium, but also participating as producers/practitioners. We look to build on research already undertaken to schematise the coordinates of Podcast Studies (Llinares, Fox, Berry 2018, Lindgren 2018, Spinnelli & Dann, 2019). The ability to participate in podcasting through multiple approaches (as producer, listener, hobbyist, educator, researcher, etc.) points to podcasting as what Swiatek (2018) calls a “bridging medium,” and speaks to what Llinares (2018) might call the liminality of the medium -- occupying the intermediary space between the ‘doing’ and the ‘thinking’, the ‘what’ and the ‘why’. Even the word podcasting itself is used interchangeably as both a noun and a verb -- the former to distinguish and identify this new medium, the latter to describe the action of making content for that medium -- affirming the existence of intercedent space shared by practice and theory.

In this edited collection we seek to incorporate a range of notable and emerging media scholars who actively see themselves working within Podcast Studies and whose research opens up questions with regards to the relationship between theory and practice. In each chapter the writer explores how specific theoretical paradigms inform their podcasting practice and, in turn, how the experience of that production has reformed, developed, even revolutionised a theoretical concept or direction. We expect there to be a strong influence of autoethnography in the chapters with authors reflecting on their own practices. But it is the intention of the book that these practices are discussed through theoretical contexts that will help to develop a conceptual framework for the future of Podcast Studies. It is our belief that as much as if not more than any other medium, analysis of podcasting emerges through the practice of doing podcasting.

**Details**

In the first instance please submit abstracts of 300 words (max) and a short bio to Dr Dario Llinares d.llinares@brighton.ac.uk or Prof. Lori Beckstead lbeckste@ryerson.ca: **Deadline 16th January 2021**

Articles to 6000-8000 words long.