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Oct13

[Mike](#)

[The newsroom 'soundtrack'](#)

For those who still haven't had enough about the sound-effect bed used in "[Dateline: RIT – The Podcast](#)," read on.

The background sound effect (the "bed") is a newsroom [teletype](#). Old timers like Bob, Paul, Kathy and me once worked in newsrooms



where the sound of a teletype machine—often multiple teletype machines, with bells signaling bulletins—was, along with police scanners, part of the 24/7 "soundtrack." It was pretty cool being among the first to know about breaking news. (Aside: Teletypes, like the one shown here [from WGSU-FM, circa 1984], spewed copy non-stop from big spools of paper—leading to the phrase "rip 'n' read" to describe newscasters who would literally rip copy from the wire and read it verbatim on-air.)

To recreate a sense of urgency—"breaking news" delivered direct from the newsroom—radio stations sometimes used teletype sound effects beneath live newscasts. It's called 'theater of the mind,' and no medium does it better than radio—although podcasts have the same potential.

But, some people questioned, will listeners to our podcast—especially younger ones—"get it"? Well, that's why I'm explaining it.

The bed also enhances the podcast's energy level and quickens its pacing—creating what's known as "forward momentum." (A side benefit: A bed can also hide a multitude of sins—including undesirable background noise arising from the fact that our recording studio, studio 5A, doubles as, well, my office. In other words, it's not a recording studio at all, and the mic tends to pick up ambient noise.)

Some quibble that the sound effect itself is "noise." Fair enough. After all, music to one person's ears is noise to another's. Without restating the entire rationale given in my earlier post, [Fun with sound effects](#), let me simply say: Knowing now what it is, I hope you can conjure in your mind a little 'theater of the mind.' (Heck, if Orson Welles was able to convince listeners that [aliens had landed in New Jersey](#), maybe you can feel—just a little—as though you're eavesdropping on a busy newsroom. Give it a try. Again, *it's only five minutes.*)

By the way, while most of my remarks have been directed at the small handful of people who dislike the podcast sound effects, I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the equally small number of people who've expressed that they *like* the effects. Yes, they do exist. They're over there, right next to the *huge* group of people who don't care either way.

Next time: [The "Dateline: RIT" brand and blazing a trail](#)

1. [Name that-](#) Oct13

[...] Next time: The newsroom "soundtrack" Fun with sound Oct06 [...] Coming up: More on swooshes, teletypes, Skype, Sounddogs and TV cartoons—along with a chance to win a University News prize package. Birth of a podc Sep29 [...] Next time: What's the deal with those sound effects, anyway? Behind the scen Sep22 [...] That's the "why" behind the purpose of "Dateline: RIT." Next time, more on the "how" behind the new podcast. Name (required) E-mail (required) Website [...] Name (required) E-mail (required) Website [...] Jared Lyon Oct05 I think the podcast is a great idea, and I'm glad RIT has jumped into it. Nothing says "we're a tech school" like having a podcast and a blog. [...] Ren Oct11 is it from family guy? Mike Saffran Oct12 No, sorry, Ren—that's incorrect. Thanks for trying, though. Thanks also to Jeremy, for your guess of The Simpsons, and to Lindsay, for your guess of Road Runner, received via e-mail. Keep trying everyone! Name (required) E-mail (required) Website [...]

2. [Fun with sound](#) Oct13

[...] Coming up: More on swooshes, teletypes, Skype, Sounddogs and TV cartoons—along with a chance to win a University News prize package. Birth of a podc Sep29 [...] Next time: What's the deal with those sound effects, anyway? Behind the scen Sep22 [...] That's the "why" behind the purpose of "Dateline: RIT." Next time, more on the "how" behind the new podcast. Name (required) E-mail (required) Website [...] Name (required) E-mail (required) Website [...] Jared Lyon Oct05 I think the podcast is a great idea, and I'm glad RIT has jumped into it. Nothing says "we're a tech school" like having a podcast and a blog. [...]

3. [Justin Thorp](#) Oct16

I have no problem with the sound effect as long as they don't distract me from listening to what the people are actually saying. My only question is...Whats the point in having a sound effect if you have to write a blog post explaining what it is? What kind of results have you guys gotten from the podcast? Are people downloading it? Is this a method that you would recommend to faculty or university groups for getting their message out? Maybe you could write a blog post about where the podcast fits in the pr guys tool box?

4. [Silandara](#)

Oct17

I can answer that one, Justin, as I just ran a stats report. Yes, people are downloading the podcast. :) In July, we started with 569 hits to our feed, August saw an increase to 1969, and in September that soared to 5450. Who knows what October will bring...?

5. [Justin Thorp](#)

Oct17

How many unique subscribers are there or how many downloads do you get per show?

6. [Mike Saffran](#)

Oct18

Thanks, Silandara, for the stats, which give us a *general idea* regarding popularity of our podcasts. Thus far, we're quite pleased with the acceptance. In further response to Justin's question: True audience measurement for podcasts is problematic. While we're able to count downloads and RSS subscriber clicks on the University News Web site, we cannot know with certainty the number of subscribers and downloads through iTunes, which caches some podcasts. Regarding your question, "What's the point in having a sound effect if you have to write a blog post explaining what it is?" . . . my first inclination is to respond with a question: Can't the same be said about a lot of things? For instance, what's the point in having a blog, podcasts and RSS feeds if we have to explain what they are to readers of [News & Events?](#) (The obvious answer, of course, is that we believe it's worth the extra effort.) But, more precisely, I simply don't consider the need for some explanation to be a deal breaker. After all, even if a sound effect isn't entirely clear to a handful of people, I'm pretty sure the world is going to keep spinning tomorrow. And if it doesn't, it will have nothing to do with the RIT podcast. (At least I hope not.) So, despite the many words on this blog about podcast sound effects, I just don't see it as all that big a deal in the bigger picture.

7. [Silandara](#)

Oct18

Justin - Thanks, I think I have a topic for my next blog post! :) Specifically tracking how many subscribers we have to each of our RSS feeds (this blog, the podcast, our news releases, and RIT in the news placements) is challenging. Our web stats show how many total hits each feed gets, but not the number of unique subscribers. And while I can pull how many hits each episode has received, I haven't yet compiled that kind of detailed data.

8. [Mike Saffran](#)

Oct19

The current (Oct. 23) issue of [BusinessWeek](#) magazine has an interesting article on Web traffic measurement, "[Web Numbers: What's Real?](#)" A couple of the article's more revealing statements: "The dirty little secret of Silicon Valley is that no one knows exactly who is going where on the Web." "Web metrics . . . will remain a crapshoot."

9. [Blazing a trail](#)

Oct20

[...] More podcasters will increasingly utilize beds and sound effects. For listeners, they will help create what I described last time as 'theater of the mind' and mark a natural progression as a growing number of podcasts are created using sophisticated audio-editing software and sound studios—resulting in podcasts that sound more produced and polished (if you can, why wouldn't you?). [...]

10. [Ralph W.](#)

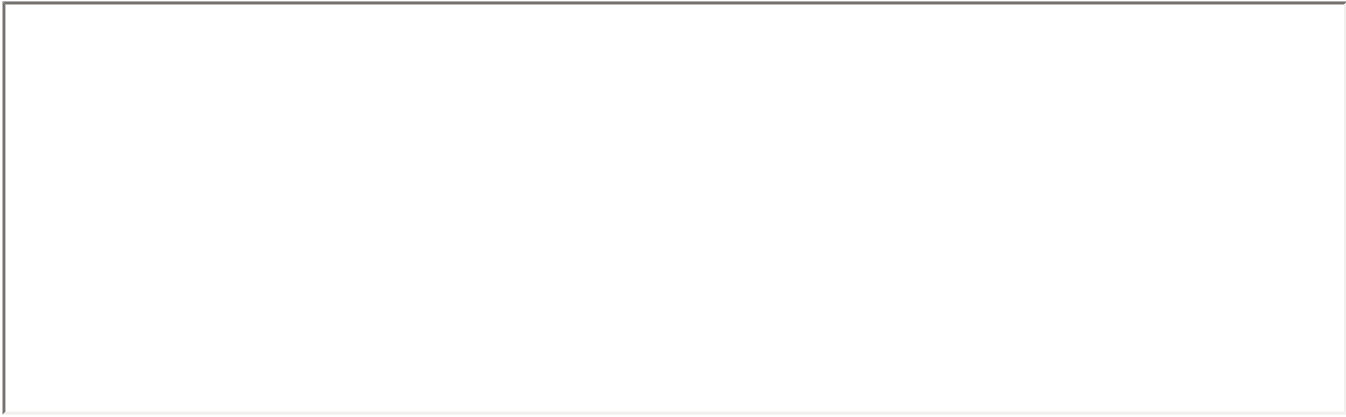
Oct20

47% of all web statistics are made up.

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