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2005: Year of the Podcast

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In February 2005, I wrote that podcasting may prove to be the next big thing in continuing legal education. Less than a year later, podcasting shows all signs of going mainstream, receiving a major push in June when Apple added podcasts to its iTunes Music Store. There is no doubt that, in technology, 2005 was the year of the podcast.

Today, there are thousands of podcasts, many produced by professional news and broadcast organizations, others produced by amateurs using little more than a microphone and a computer. In February, there were only a handful of podcasts related to law. Today, the number has multiplied, although the total remains modest. Legal professionals now can find a range of high quality podcasts on a variety of topics. This column reviews 10 of them, but it is not a 10-best list. My purpose is to show a cross section of the podcasts being produced for and by lawyers. These 10 share the characteristics of quality and consistency, but there are other law-related podcasts out there equally deserving of your ear.

An advertisement for LOBBYSEARCH.com. It features a light blue background with a white box containing the text "Find the right advocate for your organization at LOBBYSEARCH.com". The logo "LOBBYSEARCH.com" is in a stylized font with a blue star in the 'O'. Below the logo, it lists search criteria: "Search by location, issue, expertise, party ties, background, experience, and more."

But first: What is a podcast? Simply put, podcasting is a means of automatically publishing and distributing digital audio files, usually MP3 files. Listeners subscribe to a podcast in much the same way they subscribe to a news or blog feed. Anyone who can record an audio file can create a podcast. As a producer releases new podcasts, interested listeners are notified and can download them automatically. The name podcast suggests playback in an iPod or other MP3 player, but you can listen to them on your computer or burn them onto CDs.

The process is much the same as subscribing to a news feed or a blog. The easiest way to start finding and listening to podcasts is to download Apple's iTunes or the open source podcast player Juice.

Now on to the 10, listed alphabetically, not by rank.

- [Coast to Coast](#)

Yes, this is my own podcast, a weekly legal news program that I co-host with California lawyer J. Craig Williams. But I believe it warrants listing here, not because of the hosts, but because of the extraordinary guests who participate in our programs. Our guest list has ranged from the president of the American Bar Association to a Texas Supreme Court justice to the national editor of CBS News, all discussing current topics in legal news.

- [Conversations in Law](#)

Produced by Hamline University School of Law, this series covers law, leadership and legal education. The podcasts are recordings of lectures by visiting speakers and law school faculty. They include Kenneth Feinberg recalling the many personal stories he heard as administrator of the 9/11 victim compensation fund, Minnesota's first female Supreme Court justice, Rosalie Wahl, speaking about her experiences on the bench, and Stephen Steinlight, executive director of the American Anti-Slavery Group, describing the horrors of slavery in the world today.

- [Evan Schaeffer's Legal Underground](#)

Illinois lawyer Evan Schaeffer is a podcasting old-timer, with a year of programs under his belt. He offers thoughts on legal news stories, while promising "never to take podcasting too seriously." Topics range from "law-related things that suck" to "a prayer for plaintiffs' lawyers."

- [Family Law News and Views](#)

Jimmy Verner Jr., a family law attorney in Dallas, publishes this "audio blog," discussing topics such as alimony and maintenance, antidepressants and family law, premarital agreements, child support and community property. Verner's programs are targeted at a nonlawyer audience.

- [Internetcases.com](#)

Chicago lawyer Evan Brown produces this series, focused on Internet law issues. Most programs feature Brown discussing a recent case of significance. One "special edition" podcast had Cindy Cohn, legal director of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, discussing issues relating to file-sharing.

- [IT Conversations -- Law](#)

This user-supported network of high-quality interviews, discussions and presentations from major conferences is delivered live and on-demand via the Internet. Its law series includes lectures and panel discussions on a broad range of legal topics

related to information technology.

- [New Jersey Law Blog](#)

Stark & Stark offers weekly legal updates via podcasts as part of its blog about New Jersey law. Lawyers from various practices in the firm discuss recent developments in New Jersey and federal law.

- [Podcasts on Demand](#)

Fios, an electronic data discovery company, has converted a series of litigation Webcasts into podcasts. Topics include preservation of electronic records, EDD and spoliation. Because these were originally Webcasts, they include presentation slides as a separate download in PDF format. One frustrating feature: You must re-register each time you download a program.

- [Supreme Court Watch Podcast](#)

Produced by Alliance for Justice, a national organization advocating for preserving "the integrity and independence of the Supreme Court," this podcast is part of the the larger Supreme Court Watch Web site. It features AFJ staff attorneys and others discussing current developments at the Supreme Court and the future of the court.

- [The Debt Podcast](#)

New York bankruptcy lawyer Jay Fleischman produces this series of podcasts aimed at helping debtors get back on their feet. His consumer-oriented podcasts tackle topics such as credit reports and balance transfers.

Whether you want to listen to podcasts or create one of your own, a helpful primer is the [Wikipedia entry on podcasting](#). Either way, dive in and give it a try.

If this column whet your appetite for podcasts, here are others worth a listen:

- [American Center for Law and Justice](#)
- [Audible Althouse](#)
- [Bag and Baggage](#)
- [Center for Computer-Assisted Legal Instruction](#)
- [Check This Out!](#)
- [Crimlaw](#)
- [Georgetown Law Webcasts](#)
- [Life of a Law Student](#)

- [Office Hour](#)
- [Rethink ip](#)
- [Southern California Law Blog](#)

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