Call for papers

International Symposium on Radio and Podcasts Paris 2026

Podcasts: a new media or the continuation and reinvention of radio?

Podcasts are a new medium that emerged in the 2000s and have seen the strongest growth among audio formats—music and radio—in recent years. According to Médiamétrie, by 2024, more than one in three French people (38%) say they listen to radio podcasts at least once a month, and 21% listen to native podcasts. Among younger listeners (aged 15-24), 43% listen to radio podcasts and 44% listen to native podcasts. In consequence,This shift in audio listening offsets a downward trend in live radio listening. Over the past 20 years, driven by the rise of the consumer Internet, which has enabled the expansion of the audio universe, the emergence of new technologies, the democratization of production tools, and the emergence of new formats (Deleu, 2012), podcasts have gradually established themselves as a cultural object in their own right (Waldmann, 2025), as they are now integrated into the vast field of cultural goods alongside music, television series, and cinema.

Above all, podcasts have space in the media landscape alongside radio (Brachet, 2009), as an extension or alternative when it is referred to as native. Podcasts seem to be innovative in terms of their availability and individualization. Compared to radio, podcasts have emerged in France as a novelty (known as native podcasts) and as an extension of radio (the rebroadcast podcast). In the United States, podcasting is presented as the innovation that saved radio, described as moribund (Biewen and Dilworth, 2017), and has become a subject of research in its own right (Berry, Llinares, and Fox, 2018; Verma, 2024). This conference proposes to address the relationship between this new medium and radio, its programs, and its practice.

Axe 1 Histoire et évolution du podcast en anglais : Axis 1: History and evolution of anglophone podcast

Contributions on the origins and history of podcasting are welcome. While the use of the term "podcast" can be dated fairly accurately (its origin is often attributed to Guardian journalist Ben Hammersley, and dates back to 2004 (Berry, 2006; 2015; Volcler, 2018), it seems more complex to trace all the stages that led to its emergence. We know It was already possible to download audio files before the word appeared. In the wake of Volcler's research (2018), it may be interesting to look back at pioneering experiments (the MP3 saga, for example), namely the identification of podcast productions prior to 2004, the study of the names chosen, as well as those of the structures that designed them (and for which audiences), and to make room for the history of new technologies (development of the consumer internet, democratization of audio content production tools, appropriation of tools by audiences), from an international perspective (Crook, 1999). It would also

be relevant to trace the history of podcasting since the early 2000s. Is it already possible to identify milestones in the young history of podcasting in order to explain its evolution and better understand the specificities of its development?

These presentations may focus on podcasts of any kind (native or rebroadcast), including media, academic, institutional, or branded content, and may even reexamine the definition itself, since the word "podcast" is now used to describe productions that include images. Attention will also be given to the challenges of podcast archiving, since one of the questions is what has been produced since the advent of podcasts and how they can be archived (or not) today (Morris, Hoyt, 2021).

Axe 2 : Specificities of podcasts : accessibility, format, narration, serialization and intimacy

Podcasts are unique in that they are both a new medium and have many similarities with radio, with which they share the audio dimension. Presentations may take a comparative approach, highlighting how podcasts differ from radio (and other modes of audio content distribution) and/or how they redefine some of the specific features of radio. Although it was already possible to listen to radio in a non-linear way, thanks to magnetic tape (cassettes) and recording devices, podcasts are much more easily accessible thanks to new media (computers, phones, watches, etc.). Similarly, podcasts are often attributed with characteristics that were previously associated with radio (intimacy, seriality, etc.) (Deleu, 2006; Beccarelli, 2021). This is undoubtedly part of a desire to make content more visible, to differentiate it from radio, and to better establish its legitimacy as a new medium. However, podcasts also (re)invent a serial dimension and the notion of intimacy, particularly in the way they address their audience.

Podcasts also offer new forms of storytelling (particularly in the fields of journalism and fiction) and new modes of investigation (Berry and Llinares, 2018). Similarly, it is clear that podcasts are helping to expand the public sphere, just as radio did before (with the emergence of pirate radio stations in the 1970s (Lefebvre and Poulain, 2016)), by favoring certain content that is absent or less present on radio), but the distribution tools they use allow for much wider distribution than radio, and this content is partly beyond the reach of regulatory bodies. Therefore, the major issue today is more so the need to publicize content than the struggle to make it public. This content is also influenced by changing modes of reception and social networks, which are also part of the production process. Contributions may revisit these characteristics in order to better highlight all the benefits of podcasting.

Axis 3 The podcast ecosystem and its relationship with radio stations

Existing maps of podcast stakeholders are primarily descriptive (Hurard and Phoyu-Yedid, 2020, CosaVostra, 2024). The professional and social relationships between authors, studios, and media producers on the one hand, and hosts, advertising agencies, and listening platforms on the other, are beginning to be described (Thuillas and Wiart, 2023; Wiart, 2023). Several professionals and academics are contributing to this exploratory work by proposing surveys and maps, but this movement is far from complete (for an overview, see Lesaunier (2023), Mercier, Di Sciullo, and Lesaunier (2022) via Obcast (Observatoire du podcast), and in the professional field, see Podcast Magazine and La lettre pro de la radio et du podcast). At the same time, Arcom and the Ministry of

Culture created the Podcast Observatory in 2022, which works to describe the ecosystem and players in this sector (Mapping the podcast ecosystem and its players, Arcom, 2024, Volume and characteristics of French-language podcast offerings, Arcom, 2025).

We consider four major players in podcast production in France: radio stations (which may be associated with Arte Radio), large independent companies (Binge, Nouvelles Écoutes, Slate, Louie Media, etc.), the print media (Les Echos, Le Monde, etc.) (Deleu, 2025), freelancers and small independent producers (Julien Cernobori and Samia Basille, for example), who are the most numerous. The public service broadcaster Radio France occupies a central place in France through its investment in this medium and media. We encourage submissions that examine the relationships between these players. How is this new podcast ecosystem structured, how integrated or fragmented is it, and how dependent or independent is it from radio media?

Axis 4 Podcasters: origins, backgrounds, intentions, working conditions, and relationship to radio

At first glance, the world of podcast production appears to be impossible to define in strictly professional terms, given the profusion of authors who are both non-professional and undeclared in one way or another, either through a common legal status or a common broadcaster. Most podcasters are unpaid amateurs who have a second job (production or project manager, journalist, sound engineer, social worker, teacher, coach, actor, counselor, paramedical professions, etc.). Very few are actually funded by companies or institutions. Their connection to radio varies depending on whether they work for an independent private studio (Binge, Nouvelle Écoutes, etc.), Arte Radio, or a studio integrated into a radio station (Europe 1, ICI/France Bleue) (Schmitt et al., 2025). The situation is obviously specific to Radio France, since podcast authors are primarily radio program authors; they work as producers, journalists, or directors.

Training in journalism and regular work for a media outlet shape professional identity around the figure of the journalist. Conversely, distance from media institutions promotes the subjective identity of independent podcasters, whose proximity is undoubtedly closer to that of "creators" than "intellectuals" (Glevarec, 2001; Schmitt et al., 2025). The absence of a legal framework for this profession (Smati and Ricaud, 2017) contributes to the instability of identifications. A solitary profession with little objectification of success and value, which is not compensated for by interactions in a professional working environment, the activity of independent podcasters remains to be examined. What about the investment in native podcasting depending on gender? Is it reflected in a change in the gender imbalance in radio (Larochelle, 2025; Bazin and Lezer, 2024)?

Axis 5 Reception of podcasts and radio and audio formats in general

We know that radio has been experiencing a decline in listenership over the past twenty years or so due to the spread of the internet and the content it has generated: access to music, first pirated and now streamed, access to live and replay videos on platforms (YouTube, Twitch) or social networks. Young audiences have gradually become less captive to radio as the sole provider of music and "relevant" programs, i.e., programs that speak to them, such as call-in shows (Glevarec, 2005). While from a radio perspective this decline in audience numbers is seen as a drop in listenership, from a sociological perspective it can be understood as part of a change in the ecosystem that has had the effect of dispersing an audience and attention that was once captive and monopolized by a hegemonic audio medium (Glevarec and Pinet, 2009). Podcasts are part of this new environment.

Compared to radio, podcast listening is more widespread in other contexts: public transportation, commuting, and work. In short, podcasts are linked to (available) moments in everyday life and contrast with radio in the same way that opportunistic listening contrasts with scheduled listening, hence the priority given to short listening formats. Podcasts are listened to alone, on a smartphone, with headphones or earphones, or on speakers. Recommendations from friends and family are the primary means of discovery, which tends to place them back in the realm of personalization. We can make a hypothesis about podcasts and radio, namely that listening is motivated by a strong socio-biographical singularization ("what I choose to listen to speaks to me, concerns me for reasons related to my personal history, etc.") (Glevarec, 2021). What about this individualization and fragmentation of the audience? Who are podcast listeners? What do they listen to? What are the reasons for their preferred listening habits? Do they differentiate between podcasts and radio programs? These are all questions on which proposals are welcome.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Proposals must be submitted in French, English, or Spanish by December 19, 2025. The proposal must include: a title (and subtitle), an abstract, 5 to 7 keywords, and a reference to one or more of the themes of the call for papers. It should outline the issue, hypotheses, and bibliographical references in no more than 5,000 characters. Personal information (last name, first name, affiliated institution, status, postal and email address, telephone number) must be included at the top of the first page. Proposals should be sent to the following two email addresses: christophe.deleu@unistra.fr / herve.glevarec@cnrs.fr / secretariatgrer@gmail.com

A confirmation of receipt will be sent to the authors of the proposals. The organizing and scientific committees of the conference will evaluate the projects. During the conference, presentations may be given in French, English, or Spanish. If the presentation is given in English or Spanish, it must be accompanied by a visual presentation (PowerPoint or similar) in French summarizing the main points of the presentation. Responses (acceptances, rejections, requests for modifications) will be sent to authors starting February 1, 2026. At the end of the conference, the final papers received and presented will be selected for publication. To this end, a new double-blind selection process will be carried out by the journal's editorial board, in accordance with the rules common to scientific journals.

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RadioGraphy Research Notebook: http://radiography.hypotheses.org

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