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UIS reaches out through iTunes

University has podcasts, videos on Web site free of charge

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Through its new iTunes Store listing, the University of Illinois Springfield is bringing some of its archived oral history to more than 200 million users worldwide.

The listing in the iTunes Store, a software-based online digital media store, also is boosting the campus' presence on the Web, said Munindra Khaund, multimedia education coordinator in the UIS Department of Information Technology Services.

"We wrapped a story around the interviews that we extracted from the old cassettes and packaged them," he said.

In the first three months UIS has been part of the iTunes Store, new downloads have increased by more than 75,000. Previously, the campus averaged only 3,000 downloads every three months.

UIS was selected by Apple Inc. to join the iTunes Store on Aug. 18. Prior to that, UIS had been using an internal iTunes U account on campus since January 2007, with limited public access. All the UIS content is free of charge.

"Before, students could get access to courses for which they were registered," Khaund said. "Some were available to the public, but not all."

To become listed in the iTunes Store, Apple wanted the university to supply content that went beyond academics and social outreach.

"It's really a library store," Khaund said. "They look at things like proper formats and branding."

One of the podcasts attracting the most attention is "The Beatles: Popular Music and Society," a series put together by Michael Cheney, a UIS communications professor. Listeners of Cheney's series numbered about 250 in February and March, then shot up to more than 60,000 downloads in September and October after membership in the iTunes Store began.

The "Revealing Voices" series produced by Khaund and other campus collaborators was chosen last month by Apple as one of nine noteworthy podcasts (from among about 200,000), helping to boost downloads by 7,000 in two weeks.

"We have a lot of oral history in our archives, and it has been a goal of mine to bring some of those resources out," Khaund said.

Pieces involving Springfield were selected for the first series of "Revealing Voices," which centers on the Springfield Race Riot of 1908. "Women in World War II" is the topic of the second series.

"We've made it more accessible," he said.

The podcasts also are helpful to students, who can log on and listen to them for free. Lectures, seminars and student assignments are available.

Connor Tubbs, a senior in legal studies, said in a video news release that he listens to the podcasts while he's working out or doing household chores.

"You can listen to a note session repetitively," Tubbs said.

"We've been able to capture faculty content knowledge and deliver it to students," Khaund said. "The benefit of that being that the students are able to review, pause, rewind and take better notes and help in their different learning styles."

He said UIS content in the store is now searchable.

"We are able to get our story out in a very inexpensive manner," Khaund said. "iTunes provides a way to really have great social outreach, and it's a great recruiting tool."

"I think it's a great market research story. It's given us a really, really wide reach."

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On the Web

To access UIS on iTunes U, go to <http://itunes.uis.edu>. All content is available free of charge.

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