

Video Feeds Follow Podcasting

By Daniel Terdiman [Daniel Terdiman](#) | 2004-12-07 12:50:00.0

With the success of podcasting -- a recent technology that lets anyone subscribe to and play back audio feeds on an iPod -- the natural next step is technology that can do the same with video.

First a [podcasting](#) primer: It works much the same way as syndication of content through RSS or [Atom](#), except that instead of text from blogs or news sites, podcasting sends songs directly to iPods or other MP3 players.

Now comes video. Already, there are rudimentary applications like [Vogbrowser](#), which offers video feeds to which people can subscribe, much like they do with RSS feeds. There are more products like this on the way.

"We think of it internally as TiVocasting," said Scott Rafer, president and chief executive of the blog search engine Feedster, which has begun offering video feeds through a dedicated site, [FeedsterTV](#). "Video stuff is now coming into play. It's one thing to have a bunch of video files dumped into a folder on your desktop. The interesting future is when it is put into a TiVo-style mechanism."

Right now, there isn't much video content to view this way: It's mostly lectures, tutorials and clips cribbed from the Jon Stewart show. And it takes some technical know-how to hack a Linux box to play back the feeds in applications like Vogbrowser. Unlike podcasting, which uses a consumer-friendly device for playback, there is no easy method for automatically transferring video files onto a TV.

For now, the early grunt work is being done by people like Kenyatta Cheese, Vogbrowser's developer, and Jay Dedman, a New York television production teacher.

"With video, it's really hard to send that (feed) to your TV, which is the way most people want to watch video," said Cheese. "Given that there's an absence of that cool device, the idea is to keep it in the browser for now."

So Cheese built Vogbrowser, a server-based viewer on which the hacking-inclined can watch video feeds from aggregators like FeedsterTV and [Blogdigger](#).

At the same time, Dedman and his colleagues are putting the finishing touches on the first iteration of a viewer called Ant.

"It'll look like iPodder, but will have a nice viewing window," Dedman said, referring to one of the leading podcasting applications. "When you subscribe to video feeds, they'll show up and you can make playlists of your favorite feeds."

Dedman said Ant should be done sometime this week. He said the application will be open source and will be made available through SourceForge. But Ant, like Vogbrowser, is not aimed at the casual user.

Still, a lot of people are working on the problem, and most think that in the next few months, it will be possible for mainstream users to sit on their couches, remotes in hand, watching their choice of video feeds.

"The aggregator vendors are working on invoking QuickTime and Windows Media Player from within the aggregator," said Rafer, who added that such developments probably won't go public until sometime in 2005.

In the meantime, the number of available video feeds is small compared with what's available with podcasting, not to mention the millions of RSS feeds available today. One issue is that video uses a lot of storage and bandwidth, and many people who might like to offer regular video content probably couldn't afford the related costs.

"If you get a video site and that becomes popular, your bandwidth is going to go up, and that could get expensive," said Blogdigger's Greg Gershman. "That could be a discouraging factor."

But Dedman said the [Internet Archive](#) has offered to host rich media content, and that could make a major difference in encouraging significant numbers of potential video-content producers both to create content and to push for further advancement of automatic playback technology.

And while some people's feeds are little more than content taken from elsewhere on the web, Dedman is promoting the creation of new work.

"My interest is to keep this open source and to promote original video," he said. "I'm not so much interested in the latest *Bad Boys II* video."
