

Blogging

BLOGS

"Blogger" redirects here. For the blog publishing system owned by Google, see Blogger (service).

A blog (an abridgment of the term web log) is a website, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art (artlog), photographs (photoblog), sketchblog, videos (vlog), music (MP3 blog), audio (podcasting) are part of a wider network of social media. Micro-blogging is another type of blogging which consists of blogs with very short posts. As of December 2007, blog search engine Technorati was tracking more than 112 million blogs. With the advent of video blogging, the word blog has taken on an even looser meaning of any bit of media wherein the subject expresses his opinion or simply talks about something.

Types

There are many different types of blogs, differing not only in the type of content, but also in the way that content is delivered or written.

Personal blogs

The personal blog, an on-going diary or commentary by an individual, is the traditional, most common blog. Personal bloggers usually take pride in their blog posts, even if their blog is never read by anyone but them. Blogs often become more than a way to just communicate; they become a way to reflect on life or works of art. Blogging can have a sentimental quality. Few personal blogs rise to fame and the mainstream, but some personal blogs quickly garner an extensive following.

Corporate blogs

A blog can be private, as in most cases, or it can be for business purposes. Blogs either used internally to enhance the communication and culture in a corporation or externally for marketing, branding or public relations purposes are called corporate blogs.

By media type

A blog comprising videos is called a vlog, one comprising links is called a linklog, a site containing a portfolio of sketches is called a sketchblog or one comprising photos is called a photoblog. Blogs with shorter posts and mixed media types are called tumblelogs.

An Art log is a form of art sharing and publishing in the format of a blog, but differentiated by the predominant use of and focuses on Art work rather than text.

A rare type of blog hosted on the Gopher Protocol is known as a Phlog

By device

Blogs can also be defined by which type of device is used to compose it. A blog written by a mobile device like a mobile phone or PDA could be called a moblog. One early blog was Wearable Wireless Webcam, an online shared diary of a person's personal life combining text, video, and pictures transmitted live from a wearable computer and EyeTap device

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to a web site. This practice of semi-automated blogging with live video together with text was referred to as sousveillance. Such journals have been used as evidence in legal matters.

By genre

Some blogs focus on a particular subject, such as political blogs, travel blogs, house blogs, fashion blogs, project blogs, education blogs, niche blogs, classical music blogs, quizzing blogs and legal blogs (often referred to as a blawgs) or dreamlogs. While not a legitimate type of blog, one used for the sole purpose of spamming is known as a Splog.

Community and cataloging

The Blogosphere

The collective community of all blogs is known as the blogosphere. Since all blogs are on the internet by definition, they may be seen as interconnected and socially networked. Discussions "in the blogosphere" have been used by the media as a gauge of public opinion on various issues. A collection of local blogs is sometimes referred to as a bloghood.

Blog search engines

Several blog search engines are used to search blog contents, such as Bloglines, BlogScope, and Technorati. Technorati, which is among the most popular blog search engines, provides current information on both popular searches and tags used to categorize blog postings. Research community is working on going beyond simple keyword search, by inventing new ways to navigate through huge amounts of information present in the blogosphere, as demonstrated by projects like BlogScope.

Blogging Communities and Directories

Several online communities exist that connect people to blogs and bloggers to other bloggers, including BlogCatalog and MyBlogLog.

Blogging and Advertising

It is common for blogs to feature advertisements either for the financial benefit of the blogger, or to promote the blogger's favorite causes. The popularity of blogs has also given rise to "fake blogs" in which a company will create a fictional blog as a marketing tool to promote a product.

Popularity

Researchers have analyzed the dynamics of how blogs become popular. There are essentially two measures of this: popularity through citations, as well as popularity through affiliation (i.e. blogroll). The basic conclusion from studies of the structure of blogs is that while it takes time for a blog to become popular through blogrolls, permalinks can boost popularity more quickly, and are perhaps more indicative of popularity and authority than blogrolls, since they denote that people are actually reading the blog's content and deem it valuable or noteworthy in specific cases.

The blogdex project was launched by researchers in the MIT Media Lab to crawling the Web and gather data from thousands of blogs in order to investigate their social properties. It gathered this information for over 4 years, and autonomously tracked the most contagious information spreading in the blog community, ranking it by recency and popularity. It can thus be considered the first instantiation of a memetracker. The project is no longer active, but a similar function is now served by tailrank.com.

Blogs are given rankings by Technorati based on the number of incoming links and Alexa Internet based on the web hits of Alexa Toolbar users. In August 2006, Technorati found that the most linked-to blog on the internet was that of Chinese

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actress Xu Jinglei. Chinese media Xinhua reported that this blog received more than 50 million page views, claiming it to be the most popular blog in the world. Technorati rated Boing to be the most-read group-written blog.

Gartner forecasts that blogging will peak in 2007, leveling off when the number of writers who maintain a personal website reaches 100 million. Gartner analysts expect that the novelty value of the medium will wear off as most people who are interested in the phenomenon have checked it out, and new bloggers will offset the number of writers who abandon their creation out of boredom. The firm estimates that there are more than 200 million former bloggers who have ceased posting to their online diaries, creating an exponential rise in the amount of "dotsam" and "netsam" — that is to say, and unwanted objects on the Web.

Blurring with the mass media

Many bloggers, particularly those engaged in participatory journalism; differentiate themselves from the mainstream media, while others are members of that media working through a different channel. Some institutions see blogging as a means of "getting around the filter" and pushing messages directly to the public. Some critics worry that bloggers respect neither copyright nor the role of the mass media in presenting society with credible news. Bloggers and other contributors to user generated content are behind Time magazine naming their 2006 person of the year as "you".

Many mainstream journalists, meanwhile, write their own blogs — well over 300, according to CyberJournalist.net's J-blog list. The first known use of a weblog on a news site was in August 1998, when Jonathan Dube of The Charlotte Observer published one chronicling Hurricane Bonnie.

Some bloggers have moved over to other media. The following bloggers (and others) have appeared on radio and television: Duncan Black (known widely by his pseudonym, Atrios), Glenn Reynolds (Instapundit), Markos Moulitsas Zúniga (Daily Kos), Alex Steffen (Worldchanging) and Ana Marie Cox (Wonkette). In counter-point, Hugh Hewitt exemplifies a mass media personality who has moved in the other direction, adding to his reach in "old media" by being an influential blogger.

Blogs have also had an influence on minority languages, bringing together scattered speakers and learners; this is particularly so with blogs in Gaelic languages, whose creators can be found as far away from traditional Gaelic areas as Kazakhstan and Alaska. Minority language publishing (which may lack economic feasibility) can find its audience through inexpensive blogging.

There are many examples of bloggers who have published books based on their blogs, e.g., Salam Pax, Ellen Simonetti, Jessica Cutler, and ScrappleFace. Blog-based books have been given the name *blook*. A prize for the best blog-based book was initiated in 2005, the Lulu Blooker Prize. However success has been elusive offline, with many of these books not selling as well as their blogs. Only blogger Tucker Max cracked the New York Times Bestseller List.

Blogging consequences

The emergence of blogging has brought a range of legal liabilities and other often unforeseen consequences.

Defamation or liability

Several cases have been brought before the national courts against bloggers concerning issues of defamation or liability. The courts have returned with mixed verdicts. Internet Service Providers (ISPs), in general, are immune from liability for information that originates with third parties (U.S. Communications Decency Act and the EU Directive 2000/31/EC).

In *John Doe v. Patrick Cahill*, the Delaware Supreme Court held that stringent standards had to be met to unmask anonymous bloggers, and also took the unusual step of dismissing the libel case itself (as unfounded under American libel law) rather than referring it back to the trial court for reconsideration. In a bizarre twist, the Cahills were able to obtain

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the identity of John Doe, who turned out to be the person they suspected: the town's mayor, Councilman Cahill's political rival. The Cahills amended their original complaint, and the mayor settled the case rather than going to trial.

In January 2007, two prominent Malaysian political bloggers, Jeff Ooi and Ahiruddin Attan were sued by pro-government newspaper, The New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad, Kalimullah bin Masheerul Hassan, Hishamuddin bin Aun and Brenden John a/l John Pereira over an alleged defamation. The plaintiff was supported by the Malaysian government. Following the suit, the Malaysian government proposed to "register" all bloggers in Malaysia in order to better control parties against their interest. This is the first such legal case against bloggers in the country.

In the United Kingdom, a college lecturer contributed to a blog in which she referred to a politician (who had also expressed his views in the same blog) using various uncomplimentary names, including referring to him as a "Nazi". The politician found out the real name of the lecturer (she wrote under a pseudonym) via the ISP and successfully sued her for £10,000 in damages and £7,200 costs.

In the United States blogger Aaron Wall was sued by Traffic Power for defamation and publication of trade secrets in 2005. According to Wired Magazine, Traffic Power had been "banned from Google for allegedly rigging search engine results." Wall and other "white hat" search engine optimization consultants had exposed Traffic Power in what they claim was an effort to protect the public. The case was watched by many bloggers because it addressed the murky legal question of who's liable for comments posted on blogs. The case was dismissed for lack of personal jurisdiction, and Traffic Power failed to appeal within the allowed time.

Employment

In general, attempts at hiding the blogger's name and/or the place of employment in anonymity have proved ineffective at protecting the blogger. Employees who blog for elements of their place of employment raise the issue of employee branding as their activities can begin to affect the brand recognition of their employer.

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Ellen Simonetti, a Delta Air Lines flight attendant, was fired by the airline for photos of herself in uniform on an airplane and comments posted on her blog "Queen of Sky: Diary of a Flight Attendant" which her employer deemed inappropriate. This case highlighted the issue of personal blogging and freedom of expression vs. employer rights and responsibilities, and so it received wide media attention. Simonetti took legal action against the airline for "wrongful termination, defamation of character and lost future wages". The suit is postponed while Delta is in bankruptcy proceedings (court docket).

In the spring of 2006, Erik Ringmar, a tenured senior lecturer at the London School of Economics was ordered by the convener of his department to "take down and destroy" his blog in which he discussed the quality of education at the school.

Mark Cuban, owner of the Dallas Mavericks, was fined during the 2006 NBA playoffs for criticizing NBA officials on the court and in his blog.

Mark Jen was terminated in 2005 after a mere 10 days of employment at Google for discussing corporate secrets on his personal blog.

In India, blogger Gaurav Sabnis resigned from IBM after his posts exposing the false claims of a management school, IIPM, led to management of IIPM threatening to burn their IBM laptops as a sign of protest against him.

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Jessica Cutler, aka "The Washingtonienne", blogged about her sex life while employed as a congressional assistant. After the blog was discovered and she was fired, she wrote a novel based on her experiences and blog: *The Washingtonienne: A Novel*. Cutler is presently being sued by one of her former lovers in a case that could establish the extent to which bloggers are obligated to protect the privacy of their real life associates.

Catherine Sanderson, aka Petite Anglaise, lost her job in Paris at a British accountancy firm as a consequence of blogging. Although given in the blog in a fairly anonymous manner, some of the descriptions of the firm and some of its people were less than flattering. Sanderson later won a compensation claim case against the British firm, however.

On the other hand, Penelope Trunk, writing in the *Globe* in 2006, was one of the first to point out that a large portion of bloggers are professionals, and a well written blog can actually help attract employers.

Political dangers

Blogging can sometimes have unforeseen consequences in politically sensitive areas. Blogs are much harder to control than broadcast or even print media. As a result totalitarian and authoritarian regimes often seek to suppress blogs, or to punish those who maintain them.

In Singapore, two ethnic Chinese were imprisoned under the country's anti-sedition law for posting anti-Muslim remarks in their weblogs.

Egyptian blogger Kareem Amer was charged with insulting the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and an Islamic institution through his online blog. It is the first time in the history of Egypt that a blogger was prosecuted. After a brief trial session that took place in Alexandria, the blogger was found guilty and sentenced to prison terms of three years for insulting Islam and inciting sedition, and one year for insulting Mubarak.

Egyptian blogger Abdel Monem Mahmoud was arrested in April 2007 for anti-government writings in his blog. Monem is a member of the banned Muslim Brotherhood.

After expressing opinions in his personal weblog about the state of the Sudanese armed forces, Jan Pronk, United Nations Special Representative for the Sudan, was given three days notice to leave Sudan. The Sudanese army had demanded his deportation.

Personal safety

One unfortunate consequence of blogging is the possibility of attacks or threats against the blogger, sometimes without apparent reason. Kathy Sierra, author of the innocuous blog *Creating Passionate Users*, was the target of such vicious threats and misogynistic insults that she canceled her keynote speech at a technology conference in San Diego, fearing for her safety. While a blogger's anonymity is often tenuous, internet trolls who would attack a blogger with threats or insults can be emboldened by anonymity. Sierra and supporters initiated an online discussion aimed at countering abusive online behavior, and developed a blogger's code of conduct.

Therapeutic benefits

Scientists have long known the therapeutic benefits of writing about personal experiences. Blogs provide another convenient avenue for writing about personal experiences. Research shows that it improves memory and sleep, boosts immune cell activity and reduces viral load in AIDS patients, and even speeds healing after surgery.

History

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The term "weblog" was coined by Jorn Barger on 17 December 1997. The short form, "blog," was coined by Peter Merholz, who jokingly broke the word weblog into the phrase we blog in the sidebar of his blog Peterme.com in April or May of 1999. This was quickly adopted as both a noun and verb ("to blog," meaning "to edit one's weblog or to post to one's weblog").

Origins

Before blogging became popular, digital communities took many forms, including Usenet, commercial online services such as GEnie, BiX and the early CompuServe, e-mail lists and Bulletin Board Systems (BBS). In the 1990s, Internet forum software, such as WebEx, created running conversations with "threads". Threads are topical connections between messages on a metaphorical "corkboard".

The modern blog evolved from the online diary, where people would keep a running account of their personal lives. Most such writers called themselves diarists, journalists, or journalist. Justin Hall, who began personal blogging in 1994 while a student at Swarthmore College, is generally recognized as one of the earliest bloggers, as is Jerry Pournelle.[citation needed] Dave Winer's Scripting News is also credited with being one of the oldest and longest running weblogs.

Early weblogs were simply manually updated components of common websites. However, the evolution of tools to facilitate the production and maintenance of web articles posted in reverse chronological order made the publishing process feasible to a much larger, less technical, population. Ultimately, this resulted in the distinct class of online publishing that produces blogs we recognize today. For instance, the use of some sort of browser-based software is now a typical aspect of "blogging". Blogs can be hosted by dedicated blog hosting services, or they can be run using blog software, such as WordPress, Movable Type, Blogger or LiveJournal, or on regular web hosting services.

Rise in popularity

After a slow start, blogging rapidly gained in popularity. Blog usage spread during 1999 and the years following, being further popularized by the near-simultaneous arrival of the first hosted blog tools:

Open Diary launched in October 1998, soon growing to thousands of online diaries. Open Diary invented the reader comment, becoming the first blog community where readers could add comments to other writers' blog entries.

Brad Fitzpatrick, a well known blogger started LiveJournal in March 1999.

Andrew Smales created Pitas.com in July 1999 as an easier alternative to maintaining a "news page" on a website, followed by Diaryland in September 1999, focusing more on a personal diary community.

Evan Williams and Meg Hourihan (Pyra Labs) launched blogger.com in August 1999 (purchased by Google in February 2003)

Blogging becomes a political force

Since 2002, blogs have gained increasing notice and coverage for their role in breaking, shaping, and spinning news stories. The Iraq war saw bloggers taking measured and passionate points of view that go beyond the traditional left-right divide of the political spectrum.

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As an example of the rise of importance of blogs, in 2002 many blogs focused on comments by U.S. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. Senator Lott, at a party honoring U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond, praised Senator Thurmond by suggesting that the United States would have been better off had Thurmond been elected president. Lott's critics saw these comments as a tacit approval of racial segregation, a policy advocated by Thurmond's 1948 presidential campaign. This view was reinforced by documents and recorded interviews dug up by bloggers. (See Josh Marshall's Talking Points Memo.) Though Lott's comments were made at a public event attended by the media, no major media organizations reported on his controversial comments until after blogs broke the story. Blogging helped to create a political crisis that forced Lott to step down as majority leader.

Similarly, blogs were among the driving forces behind the "Rathergate" scandal, to wit: (television journalist) Dan Rather presented documents (on the CBS show 60 Minutes) that conflicted with accepted accounts of President Bush's military service record. Bloggers declared the documents to be forgeries and presented evidence and arguments in support of that view, and CBS apologized for what it said were inadequate reporting techniques (see Little Green Footballs). Many bloggers view this scandal as the advent of blogs' acceptance by the mass media, both as a news source and opinion and as means of applying political pressure.

The impact of these stories gave greater credibility to blogs as a medium of news dissemination. Though often seen as partisan gossips, bloggers sometimes lead the way in bringing key information to public light, with mainstream media having to follow their lead. More often, however, news blogs tend to react to material already published by the mainstream media. Meanwhile, an increasing number of expert's blogged, making blogs a source of in-depth analysis. (See Daniel Drezner and J. Bradford DeLong.)

Blogging becomes mainstream

By 2004, the role of blogs became increasingly mainstream, as political consultants, news services and candidates began using them as tools for outreach and opinion forming. Blogging was established by politicians and political candidates to express opinions on war and other issues and cemented blogs' role as a news source. (See Howard Dean and Wesley Clark) Even politicians not actively campaigning, such as the UK's Labour Party's MP Tom Watson, began to blog to bond with constituents.

In January 2005, Fortune magazine listed eight bloggers that business people "could not ignore": Peter Rojas, Xenia Jardin, Ben Trott, Mena Trott, Jonathan Schwartz, Jason Goldman, Robert Scoble, and Jason Calacanis.