

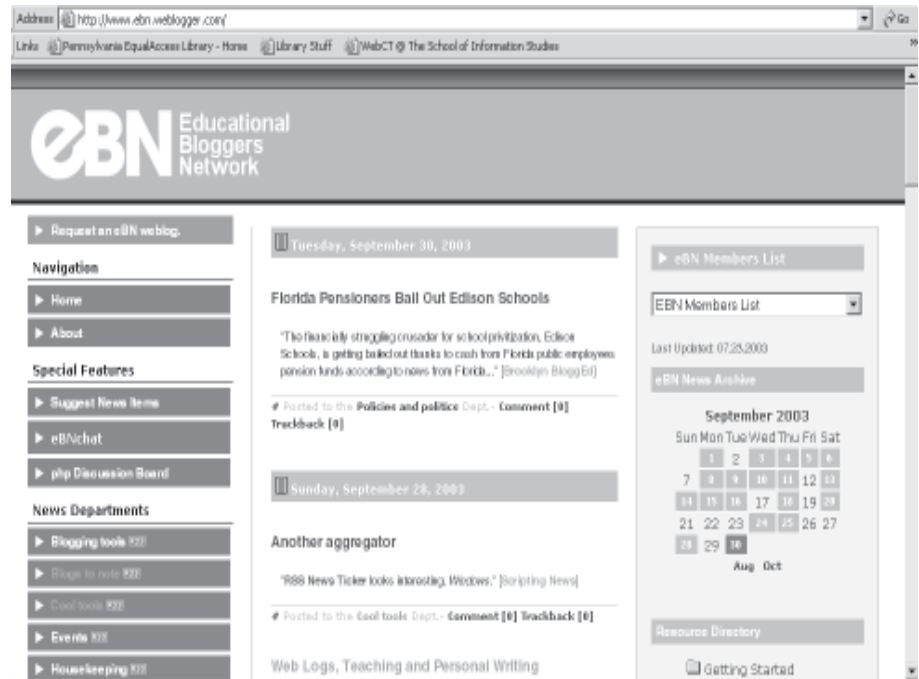
Are You Blogging Yet?

Pam Berger, Editor

The Web's real attraction for me has always been the ability to interact and communicate with others via email, web authoring, threaded discussion, and virtual communities. Now the pull is even stronger with the Web's latest format — "blogs." Web logs (also called "weblogs" or "blogs") are frequently updated website commentaries, short or long, organized chronically and sometimes include the blogger's personal life. Blogs have been emerging as an effective way to publish and communicate to a Web audience since 1996. Rebecca Blood in her book, *The Weblog Handbook, Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Blog*, reports that there were only 26 blogs in 1996; now there are millions of blogs.

In a few short years, they have grown into an exciting medium for individuals to express their opinions, participate in an online community, communicate ideas, share interesting links and document important events as they happen. Thanks to free and inexpensive blogging software that hides the programming code underlying the Web log creation, anyone can "blog."

Blogs have changed the way many people look at the Web. Using blogging software you can post content to a web site quickly and



eBN is a community of teachers and educational professionals and supporters who use weblogs for teaching and learning.

easily, making it very appealing to those who want to share information and keep current in their field. Adding a blog to your school library is free and easy. You can collect and make information accessible to students and teachers— and if you want, invite them in on the discussion. Teachers and librarians can integrate blogging into the language arts curriculum and have students publish to a wider collaborative environment where they can give and receive feedback, develop their writing voice and hone their skills as writers.

What is a blog?

Generally, blogs are web sites that consist of many entries on a single web page posted daily or at least weekly and usually include a title and date. The typical blog format is to list entries in reverse chronological order with the most recent entry on the top of the page making it easy for people to scan quickly through the entries. The best indication of a weblog is its format. If a webpage entries are arranged chronically like a diary, perhaps with a secondary topical categories, a few

Continued on page 2

Blogging...continued from page 1

paragraphs long and perhaps links to “more” or “read on” or a mechanism that enables visitors to comment on stories – you are on a blog.

Blogs are personal, whether they take the form of a diary or journal or share links to daily news items on the web. Some blogs focus on an individual’s life and typically take the form of a dairy with a few sentences (about their day, hobbies, family, work, movies, gossip, photos, etc) or a notebook that has the feel of a journal with essay-size entries. They are usually of limited use unless the person and his/her life is instinctively interesting to a wide range of people. Portal-like or information blogs tend to serve as content filters by offering links to news stories, with accompanying comments, discussion threads and other electronic content. They can be extremely useful as the blogger is sharing unique information that we might not have seen otherwise. These blogs usually focus on some theme or general topic such as library blogs, legal blogs, education blogs, etc. A few of the well-known library blogs include the Shifted Librarian <<http://www.theshiftedlibrarian.com>>The Resource Shelf <<http://resourceshelf.blogspot.com>> and Library Stuff <<http://librarystuff.net>>

In school libraries, blogs are an extension of what we already do: identify, organize, and make information accessible. Blogs let us do it in a timely fashion. It gives us an opportunity to be more responsive, to reach out to the faculty and students via our library blogs to highlight news, post student/faculty book reviews and invite comments, announce events, list new acquisitions, etc. School Librarian, Patrick Delaney at Galileo High School in San



Patrick Delaney's library blog at Galileo High School in San Francisco, California



Will Richardson's blog, Using Weblogs in Education, at Hunterdon Central Regional High School, Flemington, NJ.

Francisco has Li-blog-ary. Delaney is a pioneer in school library blogging starting in spring, 2000 at Martin Luther King Academic M.S. with the Bay Area Writing Project <http://www97.intel.com/education/odyssey/day_299/day_299.htm>. This was the first school library weblog initiative in the country.

Main Menu	
Feature Article	
Blogging	p.1
Columns	
Cyber Sites	p. 5
The Stacks	p.15
The Pipeline.	p. 18
Cyber Toolbox	p. 25

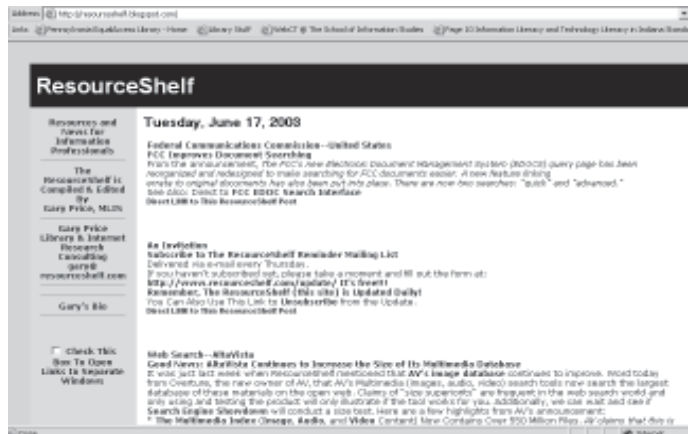
Education Blogs

Blogs are also making their way into the K-12 classroom. The Educational Bloggers Network <<http://www.ebn.weblogger.com/>>, sponsored by the Bay Area Writing Project <<http://www.bayareawritingproject.org/>> and Weblogger.com <<http://www.weblogger.com>> is a community of teachers and educational professionals and supporters who use weblogs for teaching and learning. The Educational Bloggers Network ((eBN) "is a collaborative of teachers and organizations using weblogs in education. Its purpose is to help its members, kindergarten through university, to access and use weblog technology for the teaching of writing and reading across the disciplines. The network provides a forum for educational professionals who use weblogs, an array of opportunities for teachers to continue their professional growth, and a framework for cooperation to deal with issues that affect the integration of weblog and other digital technologies into teaching and learning.

Schoolblogs <<http://www.schoolblogs.com>> which hosts over 2,000 blogs is run by Peter Ford, a teacher at the British School of Amsterdam, and Adam Curry, ex MTV-vj and co-founder of the United Resources of Jamby. Schoolblogs offer educators Web space and tools to start their own blog, free of charge.

Why are blogs becoming so popular?

The weblog phenomenon is slowly gaining momentum. Although I don't think blogging will be in the mainstream any time soon, that's not to say weblogs aren't significant. What's behind this?



continued on page 4

Blogging...continued from page 3

The first part of it might have to do with our image of the Web. It has always been known as the great equalizer in publishing, giving everyone a forum for his or her ideas. Now, it's faster and easier to share your ideas and get feedback

A weblog is technically easy. The software is easy to use and it's published immediately. Unlike FrontPage, a web-authoring software, free blogging software is actually easy to use. You can publish a weblog in minutes and have it available on the Web.

A weblog is personal. It's written by a person, not an organization or a school district. The commentaries about issues, news, resources, life events, etc. are important to that person and through them, you come to know the person. Some other forms of Internet interaction facilitate anonymous participation; in contrast, weblogs foster the development of unique voices associated with particular individuals. The technology becomes transparent and the focus is on writing and ideas. Davis Winer, a pioneer blogger, frames blogging as a guided tour through the maze of information

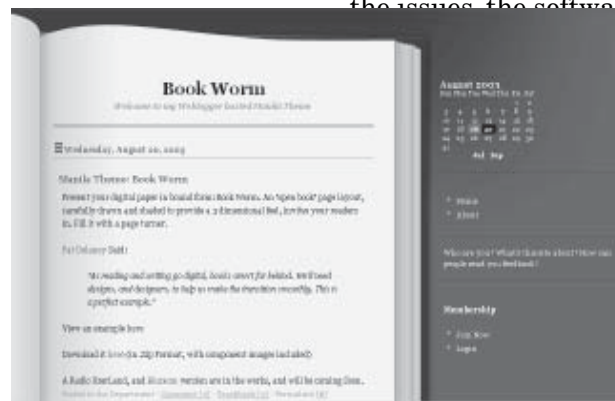
It's part of a community. A blog doesn't exist in isolation. One blog hyper links to another, bloggers have conversations across blogs and form a community based on topics, interests, passions, etc. Readers can join the conversations through their comments.

Blogging software contains web-based content management tools, search engines, and mechanisms for registering users enabling them to comment on entries. The design of the blog is separate from the content, so it can be updated and changed easily.

For students, who for the most part, live on IM, it has a sense of immediacy. Blogs are updated frequently and read by a wide audience, or through passwords, limited to a specific community.

How to get started

Try blogging yourself. The simplest method is to sign up with a blogging service provider, such as Blogger <<http://www.blogger.com>> where you can literally start a blog in 2 minutes. You create a username and a password, enter a description of your blog and select a visual theme from a list, which you can change later if you decide you don't like it. Then you choose a URL and start typing. If you are a fast typist, you can hit the Submit and Publish button before 120 seconds elapses and your blog will be go online immediately. If you are worried about open access then look at Weblogger <<http://www.weblogger.com>>. They offer Manila software from Userland for \$9.95 a month, 30-day free trial that allows multiple authors and is password protected.



A new blog theme-- perfect for librarians

Rebecca's Pocket <http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html> a history of blogging

Library Weblogs <<http://libdex.com/weblogs.html>> a list of library-related blogs arranged by country

Weblogs.com <<http://www.weblogs.com>> a list of blogs that have been updated in the last three hours

Blogging Software

Bloggig software allows a blogger to create a blog without knowing a lot of HTML or working with complicated web templates.

Blogger (available for free, hosting included)
<http://www.blogger.com>

Movable Type (free for non-profit, hosting not included)
<http://www.moavaltbetype.org>

Weblogger (Fee based, uses Manila blog tool, hosting included)
<http://www.weblogger.com>

Radio Userland (nominal fee, customizable, hosted for free)
<http://www.userland.com/>

Explore the links provided in this article, get a feel for the blog world, the unique personalities, the issues, the software and the blogs that are making blogging!