

Blogs on Marketing Library Services

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ABSTRACT

The paper identifies blogs in the area of marketing of library and information services and assesses their features and contents during January to June 2009. It is found that six blogs on marketing of library services are active and cover variety of features, frequency, file formats, web resource categories and subjects including marketing.

Keywords: Blogs, marketing, library and information services

1. INTRODUCTION

In the present era, there are many internet-based communication tools and blog is one of them. A blog or weblog consists of a webpage that is set out as a diary so that almost every day or any day, one and more authors (bloggers) can send their articles that is known as posts (entries), to be published online. The weblog can take the form of a diary, news services, a collection of links to other resources, book reviews, reports of activity on a project, photographic images of the events, and audio and videos in many form/format of documents such as MS word, powerpoint, excel or portable document file (pdf). Blog entries incorporate title, date, and time of publication, assigned category headings, keywords, hyperlinks to other web resources and name of contributor of the post. Each of a blog's entry often appear in two or three columns or with one or more columns featuring lists of links to other sites of related or common interest.

Reichardt and Harder¹ defined weblog, or blog as 'a website resembling a personal journal that is updated with individual entries or postings'. Stone² described weblog as 'a personal website that provides updated headlines and news articles of other sites that are of interest to the user, also may include journal entries, commentaries, and recommendations compiled by the users'.

Wikipedia defines a blog (a contraction of the term weblog) as 'a type of website usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video.

Blog entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order"³.

It is clear from the above definitions that blog is a most frequently updated website containing variety of information which are arranged in reverse chronological order, equipped with some technological platforms of web 2.0 and build for common or specific purpose.

The number of blogs is growing. In May 2007, a quarterly survey made by blog search engine Technorati tracked more than 70 million blogs. It was found that every day 120,000 new blogs are created and 1.5 million posts are made⁴. Wikipedia claimed that as of 16 February 2011, there are over 156 million public blogs available on the web⁵.

The two-way communication feature of a blog offers great possibilities for free flow of information on both ends (blogger and reader) and helps in many ways such as solving queries, expressing feelings and obtaining feedback through comments. Another feature of most blogging software is the facility to automatically archive entries. Availability of RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds also help to track new blog posts automatically for those users who have subscribed them.

A logically arranged and well written blog is not only fascinating but also can be an effective tool for getting information on particular area. Weblogs on general topics provide information to all the users whereas subject specific weblogs are meant to serve special groups or

communities. A review of some of the LIS blogs and library literature shows how the LIS community has been effectively using blogs for a variety of purposes.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many authors have detailed information regarding history of blogs and the tools needed for creating and maintaining them. Blood's handbook imparted information regarding creating and maintaining blogs as well as their history and resources required⁶. The first library related blog was developed by Levine through her librarian's site *Du Jour*⁷ in 1995. Thereafter, numerous library-related blogs have been created. Many authors have studied blogs, its contents and features. Clyde analysed 55 blogs in the library and information science field through its origin by countries, types of libraries involved, blog software used, blogs' aims and purposes, selected content features, and updation frequency of library blogs⁸.

Some studies such as that of Herring⁹, *et al.*, analysed 203 randomly-selected weblogs by various genre and coding like characteristics of blog author, blog purpose, and structure of blog and frequency of blog update⁹. Aharony conducted an analysis of LIS blog's comments received from readers in two phases, one is statistical descriptive analysis and another is content analysis¹⁰.

Carver stated that libraries should use blogs, as "adding a blog to your library's website, can add currency and freshness. It can also encourage patron community where everyone shares knowledge"¹¹. Fichter urged libraries to use blogs in as marketing tool to promote and explore library services to their ultimate users¹². Trivedi stated that libraries and librarians are developing LIS blogs on various topics which may be used for enrichment and promotion of library services¹³. John Dupois runs *Confessions of a Science Librarian* blog¹⁴ that shows a special interest on academic science librarians. The *Krafty Librarian*¹⁵ regularly posted information on medical librarianship issues. Vogel & Goans added that Georgia State University explored science news/events under its blogging programme initiatives¹⁶.

Reichardt and Harder suggested that academic libraries should develop subject-specific blogs with contents to meet and fulfill the information needs of the users¹⁷. Kim carried out a content analysis of cancer-related blog posts on the basis of comparison of user-defined subject tagging and software-generated subject tagging¹⁸. Pattnaik & Pattnaik listed a few subject-specific blogs focusing on the topics of library technology, library marketing, library legal issues, library association and internal library communication in library and information science area¹⁹.

Cooke defined usefulness of medical news feeds in a health science environment²⁰. Laing, Lavalley-Welch, &

Smith suggested criteria for determining the value of blogs²¹. 'Blogger Tool kit evaluating LIS blogs' provided criteria such as authority, purpose, currency, objectivity, and depth of the material which are similar to that used for evaluating websites to also evaluate the blogs in library and information science field²². Crawford studied number of posts, number of comments and post length of 607 LIS blogs during three months period (March to May) in two consecutive years 2007 and 2008 respectively²³. In 2008, Blair and Level outlined the creation of a subject-based blog at Colorado State University Libraries (CSUL) named as "The Biology, Agriculture & Natural Resources (BANR)" and suggested unique evaluation techniques for library blog such as online survey, web tracking software, RSS feed tracking, and the use of blog search engine methods²⁴.

Although there is adequate literature on blogs, its creation and usefulness, there is no sufficient literature on blog assessment especially blog posting and evaluation of subject specific blogs, particularly in the library and information science discipline.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to:

- Identify blogs on marketing of library services;
- Examine the features present in the selected blogs in terms of its contents, and structure-based on the home page; and
- Analyse the blog posts on the basis of each blog frequency, currency, and posting features during the predetermined time period of six months (January to June 2009).

4. METHODOLOGY

Searches were conducted through google (www.google.com), yahoo (www.yahoo.com) and AskJeeves (www.askjeeves.com) using the search terms library marketing blog, library marketing, blog + marketing library service and blog on marketing library area. Blog search engines and directories such as Technorati (<http://technorati.com/>), Blogdigger (<http://www.blogdigger.com/index.html>), Blogpulse (<http://www.blogpulse.com/>), Peter Scott's directory of LIS weblogs (<http://www.libdex.com/weblogs.html>), yahoo blog directory (http://dir.yahoo.com/news_and_media/blogs/), and google blog directory (<http://www.google.com/intl/en/press/blog-directory.html>) were also consulted to check the blogs specially developed on the marketing library services.

Blog roll is an important feature in the blogging environment by which a blogger lists other interested or related blogs connected with the basic theme of a blog.

Therefore, blog roll section of each identified blog was also checked in order to identify related blogs.

From the above exercise, 11 blogs were identified on marketing of library and information services as shown in Table 1.

However, after a thorough examination of the 11 blogs in Table 1, it was found that 5 blogs do not have posts after October 2008 and hence, these were not included for the study considering that these were not active blogs. Table 2 gives details of these inactive blogs.

As such six active blogs were selected for the study out of 11 blogs on marketing of library services subject and their analysis were carried out on the basis of features and content of 212 entries posted during selected period of six months (January to June 2009).

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Blog on Marketing Library Services

Table 3 gives the URLs, owners and the blog tool used with regard to the six identified blogs. Except for the blog, Bubble Room, which has been created by *Library Journal* using custom made software, the other blogs have used either the popular blog tool Blogger (<http://www.blogger.com/starts>) or Wordpress (<http://wordpress.com/>).

5.2 Blog Features

Table 4 reflects the features present in various selected blogs on marketing of library service subject. It

can be seen that there is a considerable variations in the features among the blogs. Only two features, comments posting facility and archive are found to be available on all the six blogs. None of the blogs have purpose statement, links to related resources, disclaimer and calendar, features that are commonly seen in blogs.

Some special features found in specific blogs include flag counter that used for keep track about how many people accessed the particular blogs from different countries of world on the basis on their country related flags, Shelfari is a web-based tool used for displaying books virtually similar like books keep in book shelves (information about books related to marketing library area), call facility and find the blogger online through various platforms such as delicious.com, university website, etc., on the blog MMFL.

The MWML had an option to get reactions such as such as funny, interesting, cool, etc., on its blog postings and also provides facility to deliver blog entries on a user's mobile on the user mobile number. The LMT provides video bar facility powered by YouTube, ILMA highlights heading of recent posts and recent comments, NJLMN highlights recent comments, top posts (information regarding other pages of blog) and blog metadata, and BR has special features like recent posts, recent comments and statistics about most comments received against topics.

5.3 Blog Posting Frequency

Table 5 shows that the maximum 76 entries in the 181 days of study was made in 'MWML' blog followed by 39

Table 1. Blogs on marketing library and information services

S. No.	Name of blog (abbreviated as)	URL
1.	Marketing-Mantra-For-Librarians (MMFL)	http://www.marketing-mantra-for-librarians.blogspot.com/
2.	The 'M' Word-Marketing Libraries (MWML)	http://themwordblog.blogspot.com/
3.	Library Marketing Toolkit (LMT)	http://nclibrarymarketing.blogspot.com/
4.	New Jersey Library Marketing News (NJLMN)	http://nancydowd.wordpress.com/
5.	Library Marketing-Thinking Outside the Book	http://librarymarketing.blogspot.com/
6.	Marketing Your Library	http://www.marketingyourlibrary.com/
7.	Second Circ: Library Marketing 2.0	http://secondcirc.wordpress.com/
8.	Bubble Room (BR)	http://blog.libraryjournal.com/bubbleroom/
9.	Illinois Library Matter (ILMA)	http://illinoislibrariesmatter.wordpress.com/
10.	Marketing the Library	http://star61451.tripod.com/marketingthelibrary/index.html
11.	Library Nation	http://librarynation.wordpress.com/reading-list/

Table 2. Blog on marketing of library services not fit for the study

Blog name	URL	Last date of posting found
Library Nation	http://librarynation.wordpress.com/	May 12, 2008
Library Marketing-Thinking Outside the Book	http://librarymarketing.blogspot.com/	October 22, 2008
Second Circ: Library Marketing 2.0	http://secondcirc.wordpress.com/	April 16, 2007
Marketing Your Library	http://www.marketingyourlibrary.com/	Disappeared
Marketing the Library	http://star61451.tripod.com/marketingthelibrary/index.html	Not known

Table 3. Blogs on marketing of library services

Blog name	Blog owner	Software used
NJLMN	Nancy Dowd	Wordpress
MMFL	Dinesh Kr Gupta	Blogger (blogspot)
BR	Alison Circle	Library journal
MWML	Nancy Dowd and Kathy Dempsey	Blogger (blogspot)
LMT	Pam Jaskot	Blogger (blogspot)
ILMA	Illinois Library Association- Marketing Committee	Wordpress

entries in 'NJLMN' and 37 entries in 'BR' blog. Only nine postings were made by 'LMT' during period of study.

'Comment' section is a key feature in the blogging environment which shows the responses to blog postings. Among selected blogs on subject, 'BR' blog posts received the highest number of 89 comments, 'NJLMN' received 20 comments and 'MWML' got 18 comments whilst MMFL had not received a single comment during the period of study. A particular blog post, 'Library Branding 101' on the 'BR' blog received the highest number of 36 comments²⁵.

Table 5 also indicates that the frequency of blogging is fairly low.

5.4 Features in Blog Posts

Apart from the blogger's own views, blog posts many times also include hyperlinks, images, and videos. The

study found that the maximum number of hyperlinks (118) was found in 'MWML' followed by 68 hyperlinks in 'MMFL' and 46 hyperlinks in 'BR' (Table 6). Image serves as a mirror of the any material, assists in understanding the material and attracts users as well which are frequently used in blog entries. With regard to the images also, 'MWML' blog had the maximum 68 images and 'BR' incorporated 18 images whereas 'LMT' and 'Marketing your Library' had only two images each.

The hyperlink target formats were also looked at and it was found that hypertext markup language (HTML) pages were the most commonly linked format by the blogs. Microsoft Word (DOC), PDF and PPT were used sparingly by the blogs.

5.5 Hyperlinked Content

The contents of the hyperlinked in the blog posts were analysed and is summarised in Table 7. The highest number of hyperlinks was to websites of individuals, institutions, libraries, and commercial organisations. The second highest category was 'Audio/Video/Image' and third was 'Blog posting/ particular entries'. In addition to these links were also made to 'articles', 'news', 'conference/workshop announcements and 'books/journals/magazines'. The "MMFL" blog²⁶ was the only blog to link to seven bibliographies on marketing library and information.

Table 4. Blog features

Blog feature	MMFL	ILMA	MWML	LMT	BR	NJLMN
Author name	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Author image	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Author profile	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
Author e-mail	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Purpose statement	No	No	No	No	No	No
Archives	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Category/tag	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Search facility	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Calendar	No	No	No	No	No	No
Comment posting facility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Blog roll	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Links to own works	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Links to related resources	No	No	No	No	No	No
Visitor location	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Blog hits counter	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Podcasts	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
RSS feed	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Ads	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Listen facility of blog post	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Facility to subscribe post and comments	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Disclaimer	No	No	No	No	No	No
Others	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 5. Blog frequency

Name of blog	No. of blog posts in 181 days	No. of comments
MMFL	29	0
ILMA	22	5
MWML	76	18
LMT	9	1
BR	37	89
NJLMN	39	20

Table 6. Features in blog posts

Blog	No. of hyperlinks	No. of images	Hyperlink targets			
			HTML	DOC	PDF	PPT
MMFL	68	18	56	0	10	2
ILMA	14	4	11	0	2	1
MWML	118	68	114	0	2	2
LMT	13	2	12	0	1	0
BR	46	18	43	0	3	0
NJLMN	30	7	25	1	4	0

5.6 Subject Coverage

The topic of marketing of libraries and information services has several sub-topics. Table 8 gives the various sub-topics dwelt by the different blogs during the selected period of the study. It can be seen that a wide range of sub-topics have been covered by the selected blogs. Some blogs have covered aspects other than marketing of libraries and information services which reflects that marketing techniques and its theories are

taking place into other subjects and also displays the broadness of subject coverage through blog's entries that posted during the selected period of six months (January to June 2009).

5.7 Present Situation

Though, only six blogs have been found to be active in the present time but no entry is made by MMFL, ILMA, and NJLMN after May 30, 2011, April 4, 2011 and March 17, 2011, respectively. Among six selected blogs for the study, maximum 26 entries (posting) made by 'MWML blog' and minimum 1 entry found on the blog namely 'ILMA', if examines the present status of blog posting feature by setting a small sub set of predetermined time period of three months (April to June 2011) that is shown through Table 9. In the selected period of time, comments, hyperlinks, and images also looked which found maximum on the blog, namely, 'MMFL'. The study was further discovered that the hyperlinks available in the blog's posts within selected time period and found that maximum hyperlinks attached with HTML format in comparison of other three discovered formats of web resources.

6. DISCUSSIONS

It can be seen from this study that only six blogs are active in the area of marketing of library and information services. Majority of blogs developed through Blogger software followed by Wordpress software. Most of blogs

Table 7. Hyperlinked content

Link to (out of 289 links)	Total linked targets (out of 68 links)	MMFL (out of 14 links)	ILMA (out of 118 links)	MWML (out of 13 links)	LMT (out of 46 links)	BR (out of 30 links)	NJLMN
News	15	4	2	7	-	1	1
Personal thoughts/views	2	-	-	1	1	-	-
Conference/workshop announcements	12	7	-	3	-	-	2
Articles (personal/ other/ web pages)	18	4	2	6	-	3	3
Blog postings/particular entries	32	5	-	17	-	4	6
Search engines/directories	2	-	-	2	-	-	-
Weblogs	10	3	2	4	1	-	-
Press releases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Websites(library/Personal/ organisational/commercial)	119	16	1	58	6	28	10
Application-surveys	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Bibliographies	7	7	-	-	-	-	-
Reports	4	-	2	-	1	1	-
Events/presentations	4	3	-	1	-	-	-
Newsletters	4	3	-	-	-	1	-
Books/journals/magazines	12	7	-	4	-	1	-
Audios/videos/images	38	8	3	11	3	5	8
Product catalogues	3	-	1	2	-	-	-
Tutorials	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Guidelines/tool kits	5	1	-	2	1	1	-

Table 8. Coverage of subjects

Blog	Subject covered
MMFL	Marketing library resources, marketing history, library 2.0, marketing products and services, marketing concept, marketing events, advocacy, library technology, web 2.0, public relation, library marketing research, library promotion tools, marketing news/ events, Library marketing toolkit, campaigning, librarian 2.0, Branding, online marketing, Marketing association, marketing award, future marketing, marketing newsletter, marketing e-books, web marketing.
ILMA	Library campaign, library instructions, promotion reference services, Flickr tutorial, library technology, public relation, marketing library services and product, marketing tips, marketing ideas.
MWML	Library jobs, library marketing blog, internet resource, library marketing, user education, news, library services/ product promotion, library success stories, customer study, information literacy, public relations campaign, marketing strategies, podcast, advocacy, social media, web 2.0, marketing plans, partnership marketing, word of mouth, marketing interview.
LMT	Library usages, publicity, library marketing, customer feedback, promotion.
BR	Library campaign, marketing trends, marketing concept, marketing and brand management (branding), library branding, marketing strategies, library transparency, marketing survey, library marketing, public relation, search engine strategies, publicity, library tour, customer service, social media, webinar.
NJLMN	Promotion library materials, campaigning, marketing library resources, library workshop, advertising own work, advocacy, library marketing, customer feedback, marketing training, publicity library sources, customer support (help), library marketing, library's story(evidence), library technology, webinar, advertisement, case study, library network.

Table 9. Blog posting features

Blog	No. of posting in 91 days	No. of comments	No. of hyperlinks	No. of images	Hyperlink targets			
					HTML	DOC	PDF	PPT
MMFL	4	0	5	1	5	0	0	0
ILMA	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
MWML	26	19	70	20	69	0	1	0
LMT	4	1	3	1	3	0	0	0
BR	15	18	32	16	30	1	1	0
NJLMN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

were developed by individual owners. It is suggested that more blogs on the subject should be created in order to impart concise and worthy information to wide spectrum of LIS community. It is suggested that associations and library and information agencies should build blogs with variety of web-based software and tools. It is found that maximum blogs contain archive; content posting facility, author name, and RSS feed features while none of the blogs have given purpose statement and disclaimer features. The blogs should incorporate purpose statement, disclaimer, copyright statement, complete profile of the bloggers and use of web 2.0 tools especially RSS feed, podcast, and social networking tools which will be certainly be helpful to make blogs more attractive and informative. Considering that posting and commenting are low, it is suggested that entries on the identified blogs should be more frequent and the blogs should encourage potential users to participate in discussion on the blog postings.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Blogs have become a worthy source of information in a given field of interest. It is seen from the study that blogging in the area of marketing of libraries and information services is not prolific with few blogs on the subject seemingly having stopped altogether. The other blogs also have a low frequency of postings. Blogs in the area of marketing of library services cover a variety of aspects. However, there is a need to develop more blogs

on the subject which provide concrete information, depth coverage of subject, lively postings, update frequently (on daily basis) and right on targets (aim and theme of blog) as a good blog that can be more helpful in fulfilling the information needs promptly and saving the time of the users as well as librarians.

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