

# Blog and its Role in Library and Information Services

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## ABSTRACT

There is a paradigm shift from traditional to digital-based library and information services. To keep in touch with modern technologies, libraries have to adopt new technologies. This paper defines the blog or weblog, explains blog technology, its features, and various steps of the creation of blog. It also discusses the use of blogs in library and information services.

**Keywords:** Blog, blogger, blogging, blog software, Facebook, Twitter, Vlog, Weblog

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Web 2.0 tools and technologies like Blogs, Flickr, Facebook, Myspace, Orkut, LinkedIn, Twitter, Hi5, Friendster, and Nig help in communication and sharing of information. These tools are open to all. Some of these tools are intended to a particular group of people such as CafeMom (opens to moms and to be moms) and Pinksta (opens to internet experts). Facebook, Myspace, Nig and Friendster are similar networking sites designed to connect users. Facebook acts as an online interface to reach out to the users where they are. Twitter enables its users to send and read messages. Library uses twitter to convey short messages regarding its resources and services. Flickr is an image and video hosting website, web services suite, and online community. Among these various Web 2.0 tools and technologies, weblog or blog is an important tool for information sharing and communication. It provides value-added services to library and information centres. The usefulness and popularity of blogs is increasing because of its adoptability, low cost, flexibility, and applicability. This technology may become a medium of choice for libraries.

## 2. WHAT IS BLOG OR WEBLOG?

Web attracts us by its interactive and communicative tools. The power of the blog lies not only in ease of publishing new content, but also in its ability

to automatically archive old posts and refresh the content of the main page. Therefore, blog is one of the most important and interesting tools for sharing information and communication on the Web. The term "Weblog" was coined by Jorn Berger on 17 December 1997. The short form "Blog" was coined by Peter Merholz, who jokingly broke the word into the fresh "weblog" in his blog in 1999<sup>1</sup>. Evan Williams, one of the creators of the popular blogging tool Blogger, describes it as "the blog concept is about three things: Frequency, Brevity, and Personality.

Blog is an online diary where one can post information (not only text but also audio, photographs and videos) on a regular basis. There are some related terms in creating blogs like blogger, blogging, blogging software, blogrolling, blogosphere, etc. Blogger is a person who can create, maintain, and edit or write entries to a blog. Blogging is the act of creating, authorising, maintaining or adding an article to a blog. Blogging software (Blogger, Word Press) makes it easier for people to create blogs. Blogrolling is the act of moving from one blog to another and blogosphere is the world or community of blogs and blogging.

## 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF WEBLOGS

The basic characteristics of a weblog are:

- ✂ Weblogs are personal. Users can express their own points of view about any subject. He or she can eliminate blog spam.

- ✂ Weblogs are chronological. Weblog entries display recent information at the top of the page. Older items are usually archived month by month chronologically like a diary.
- ✂ No coding is required for developing a blog. A blog is easy to create and update. A user can create unlimited blogs.
- ✂ Currency is important. Entries are automatically archived and searchable. It keeps users up-to-date providing new and breaking stories or events.
- ✂ Weblog is collaborative and communicative. It allows multiple users to post comments, which bring some interesting and valuable discussions. It includes Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed of all postings.

#### 4. HOW TO SET UP A WEBLOG?

For creating a blog, user needs to consider many things like type of blog to be set up, types of messages, target audience and security measures, etc. Blog can be set up in the following ways by either installing blogging software locally or using a remote blogging service:

- ✂ *By installing blogging software locally:* To install these software, two things are required that is platform like Mac sox, Win2k or XP, Unix or Linux, etc., and system with PHP, MySQL, Perl, etc. depending upon the nature of the blogging software.
- ✂ *By using remote blogging services:* www.blogger.com is a free service provided by the Google search engine. To set up a blog using www.blogger.com, the following steps are required:
  - ❖ Go to Blogger.com site
  - ❖ Click on “create your blog now”
  - ❖ Give user name and password (after this it assumes that the domain name was registered < 3 days ago as it longs for new domain to start working)
  - ❖ Enter the text of the first entry in your blog
  - ❖ Click on “Publish Post”. Enter FTP and Password and blog will be published with its first entry on the front page. Go to the website and see, add or delete entries at any time.

Blog software like Live journal at www.livejournal.com, Xanga at www.xanga.com, Vox at www.vox.com or Myspace at www.myspace.com, Blogger at www.blogger.com (free), Movable Type (free

for non-profit), Radio Userland (nominal fee), Rebecca’s Pocket, Library Weblogs, etc. are useful to create a blog. Some of the blogs or weblogs software are fees based.

#### 5. TYPES OF BLOGS

There are many types of blogs on the Internet. These are distinguished by their nature of the written contents. Blogs are divided into the following five categories:

- (i) *Media blogs:* A blog comprising videos is called a vlog; containing a portfolio of sketches is called sketch log; comprising photos is called photo log; shorter post, and mixed media type blogs are called tumble log. An art log is for art sharing and publishing in the format of a blog. A rare type of blog hosted on the Gopher Protocol is known as Phlog.
- (ii) *Device blogs:* A blog written by a mobile device like a mobile phone or PDA is called Moblog. Earlier blogs were wearable wireless webcam and transmitted live from a wearable computer and Eye Tap device to a website.
- (iii) *Subject blogs:* Genre or based on the main subject like political blogs, travel blogs, fashion blogs, project blogs, education blogs, music blogs, dream log, and education blog, etc.
- (iv) *Legal status:* Blogs can be individual or personal, public, or business type. Personal blogs are individual. These types of blogs have sentimental quality. Public blogs are common in nature. Blogs used internally to enhance the communication and culture in a corporation or extremely for marketing, branding or IPR purposes are called corporate blogs.
- (v) *Searching blogs:* Blogosphere are the search engines. These help to search the contents of the blogs available on the Internet.

#### 6. APPLICATION OF BLOGS IN PROVIDING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Fichter explains, “Weblogs could be used on an intranet within an organisation such as a library as one approach to knowledge management”<sup>2</sup>. Michelle Alcock suggests, “Weblog could also be used to market library services”<sup>3</sup>. Ojala discusses using weblogs, as “vehicles for knowledge management initiatives”<sup>4</sup>. Blinda Weaver suggests, “Weblog could be used as a tool for communication with library users”<sup>5</sup>. Bar-Ilan concludes that it has “an impact on the activities of information professionals and is considered as a channel for transferring information both to fellow professionals and

to other users of the Web. It is also a tool for “marketing” library events and resources”<sup>6</sup>. Clyde<sup>7</sup> mentioned the following purposes for library weblogs:

- ✂ News or information for users;
- ✂ Links to recommended internet resources;
- ✂ Book reviews, information about new books;
- ✂ Entertainment or amusement for users;
- ✂ News or information for librarians;
- ✂ Book discussions;
- ✂ News or information for trustees;
- ✂ Research tips;
- ✂ Communication among librarians (in a library system)

Weblogs or blogs can be used as an information consumer and as an information provider in libraries and information centres. Blogs provide latest information on what is going on in various fields in the world. Blogs help to enrich and develop the knowledge. Users are able to share knowledge among the same interest groups. The various uses of blogs in library setting are given below:

- ✂ *Collection development*: Blogs are used as a tool for collection development. It helps in collection development process in library if the librarians exercise a great deal of expertise and fastidiousness.
- ✂ *Providing reference services*: Reference should be always up-to-date. Reference blogs can serve the right information in right time.
- ✂ *Promote library events*: Blogs help to promote library events. Setting up RSS feed in the library blogs alert the member community what is up at the library.
- ✂ *Serve the community*: Librarians can serve community setting up blogs for each genre—mysteries, horror, science, fiction, romance, etc.
- ✂ *Encourage debate and interaction*: Weblogs or blogs can be used to interact with users offering their own choice of contributions. It encourages staff and users to participate in blog writing.
- ✂ *Alerting services*: Librarians and users can get current information about various subjects in general to specific through weblogs or blogs.

Some of libraries that use library blogs for dissemination and sharing of information are:

- (i) Ashland University Library (Academic library): <http://auircbookblog.blogspot.com>
- (ii) Georgia State University library: <http://homer.gsu.edu/blogs/library>
- (iii) Indian Prairie Public library (Public Library): <http://indianprairielibrary.org/directorsblog>
- (iv) The St. Joseph Country Public Library: <http://sjcpl.lib.in.us>
- (v) Roselle Public Library: <http://rosellepubliclibrary.blogspot.com>
- (vi) Waterboro Public library: <http://www.waterborolibrary.org/blog.html>
- (vii) California State Library: <http://blog.library.ca.gov>
- (viii) Stark County Law Library (Law Library): <http://www.starklawlibrary.org/temp/blog/index.html>
- (ix) Kendriya Vidyalaya (School libraries): <http://kvasclibraryinfo.wordpress.com>
- (x) Combined Arms Research Library (Special library): <http://www.comarmsblog.com>
- (xi) J. Eugene Smith Library (Blogs for internal communication): <http://current-awareness.blogspot.com>
- (xii) Canadian Library Association (Library Association): <http://caslisottawinformation.blogspot.com>
- (xiii) Library of Congress (Library Association): <http://blogs.loc.gov/loc>

## 7. CONCLUSION

Blogs or weblogs are not only a sharing tool for information and communication but also a working tool for promotion and publicity of library services. They are playing a dynamic and pervasive role in today’s social, cultural, civil and economic spheres of the society. The success of the weblogs depends on blogger’s inspiration, motivation, dedication and ability. It is going to be a powerful communicating and information-sharing tool in library and information services in near future.

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