

Blogs

Part 1: Blogs, Libraries, and Librarians

One of the most talked about online innovations of Web 2.0 is the use of blog software to create easily updated, content-rich Web sites. In 2004, *Merriam Webster OnLine* announced the most-searched word of the year was *blog!* *M-W's* definition from *Merriam-Webster's Words of 2004* (www.m-w.com/info/04words.htm) is: “Blog *noun* [short for Weblog] (1999): a Web site

that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer.”

Blogs are everywhere! The blog-tracking site Technorati (www.technorati.com) frequently publishes statistics. In April 2006, Dave Sifry posted this informative overview of the Blogosphere for Technorati:

- Technorati now tracks over 37.3 million blogs
- The blogosphere is doubling in size every 6 months
- It is now over 60 times bigger than it was 3 years ago

The screenshot shows the Technorati website interface. At the top, it states "Currently tracking 38.9 million sites and 2.4 billion links." and includes links for "Member Sign In", "Sign Up", "Help", and "About". The main navigation bar features the Technorati logo and buttons for "Search", "Tags", "Blog Finder", and "Explore". Below this is a promotional banner: "Add Technorati This! to your browser's toolbar and see who's blogging about any web page! Learn more...". A search bar is labeled "Search the Blogosphere" with a "SEARCH" button and an "Options" link. The main content area is titled "Explore the Blogosphere" and "Read the hottest posts from blogs on any topic." with an "Explore All >>" link. It displays three columns of blog posts:

- Politics:** "America's New 'silent Majority' And So Tonight-to You, The Great Silent Majority of My Fellow Americans-I a..." and "Steele's Tapdance" by Oliver Willis | May 10th, 2006 | 1:17 Am | He Can't Actually Let On That ...
- Tech:** "Recording Industry Now Okay With Letting You Listen to ..." and "Jesus Loves Web 2.0: EBible" (EBible, a New Bible Search Engine, is Currently in Private Beta. I'd Be Wyl...)
- Advertising:** "Google Trends First Look" (Google Is Announcing a Bunch of New Products Today as Part of Their Media D...) and "Pur Blog (it's The New ABSOLUT) P&C in The Form of PUR is Blogging...or At Least Dr Greg Allgood (with a Na...)

At the bottom, it says "See also: Popular, YouTube, News, Movies, Books and Top 100 blogs."

Figure 2: Technorati “is a real-time search engine that keeps track of what is going on in the blogosphere—the world of weblogs.” (www.technorati.com/about)

- On average, a new weblog is created every second of every day
- 19.4 million bloggers (55 percent) are still posting 3 months after their blogs are created
- Technorati tracks about 1.2 million new blog posts each day, about 50,000 per hour¹

Another useful resource for understanding how people use Internet tools is the Pew Internet and American Life Project. Pew reported on blogs in 2005, including:

- Blog readership shoots up 58 percent in 2004
- 6 million Americans get news and information fed to them through RSS aggregators
- But 62 percent of online Americans do not know what a blog is²

In this era of Web 2.0, we are looking to each other for news, recommendations, and advice instead of the proverbial “expert.” It is this proletarian nature of the blog that lends itself to the current atmosphere of trust in one’s peers. We want to be involved; we want to write our own story. Blogs are opinionated, personal, amateur, and sometimes anonymous, but may still serve as a valuable research resource. As with any new publishing outlet, measures of value need to be customized in order to judge information quality and recommendation methods should be adapted to disseminate it.

Ellyssa Kroski, Infotangle, <http://infotangle.blogspot.com/2006/02/20/authority-in-the-age-of-the-amateur>

So although the name may be a turn off or misunderstood, my guess is a lot of folks have encountered blogs and simply didn’t know that it might be called a *blog*. Library users may even be returning to the cool page that has all the best news and not even know it’s a blog!

Just a Tool!

It’s good to point out, when talking about blogs, the discussion is fundamentally about a tool—a software tool that, when created and developed by its human operator, performs a whole lot of organization and page building for Web sites. What began as hand-

coded personal journal pages, moved into free-hosted space, and then into blog software, both commercial and open source. Blogs have grown from “what I had for breakfast” chronicles to a mechanism that creates thriving personal, business, nonprofit, and educational Web sites with some keying and the click of the mouse.

The Nuts & Bolts of Blogging

A blog is a Web site that:

- is organized chronologically by date (newest entries are usually at the top);
- self-archives by date (done by software);
- is updated somewhat regularly with relatively short entries;
- includes links, more links, and still more links;
- uses a unique URL (called a “permalink”) for each individual post;
- provides an RSS feed that syndicates the blog’s content;
- does all the dirty work of creating pages and archives.

Weblog features usually include:

- Dated entries
- Mission, goal statement, or *About the Blog* area
- Categories for posts
- Permanent URLs for each post
- Comments on posts by readers
- Archives
- Lists of other blogs the author(s) reads
- Navigational links
- Tags (or keywords) for each post assigned by the author(s)
- Contact info

Posting to a blog is a simple process. Once configured, most blog software is accessed via a Web-based interface. The posting process might go something like this:



Figure 3: Screen shots of MovableType’s Web-based blog software (www.sixapart.com/movabletype)

- Open a Web browser
- Log into your blog software
- Select “new/create entry”
- Type text in the boxes for title and entry
- Click submit button

Welcome to the Biblioblogosphere

As a means to create dynamic Web pages, searchable archives, well-organized categories of information, and to free your staff to develop content instead of coding HTML or using page-creation software, blog applications fits the bill. In fact, if your library is not using some type of content-management system to disseminate information and create conversations with users, you may just be missing the *Cluetrain!* And don’t worry, the techniques and innovations described here are easy to do and either free or inexpensive.

Coined the “Biblioblogosphere” by Free Range Librarian Karen Schneider (<http://freerangelibrarian.com>), this online landscape of all things related to librarians, libraries, and blogs includes thriving external library blogs, the “behind the firewall” blogging of institutional knowledge, and a growing librarian-authored community of practice via these tools.

As I’ve explored the “biblioblogosphere,” I’ve been struck by several things. First has been the vitality and generosity of the professional exchange taking place. I have shamelessly grabbed references to other blogs and web sites, to interesting papers and new books to read. Second has been the reflectiveness of many posts—the thoughtful consideration of context, of related issues and concerns, of evaluation. Finally, there is the personal voice—with revelations of frustration, happiness, anger, optimism.

Mary Ghikas, ALA, The Green Kangaroo Blog,
<http://blogs.ala.org/greenroo.php>

Laurel Clyde, at the University of Iceland, was the leading scholar in this arena. Her untimely death in September 2005 tragically cut short her research. She did, however, publish some useful articles and a book. In *Weblogs & Libraries*, she defined the content-management system-based tool as follows:

A Weblog can take the form of a diary, a news service (or summaries of and links to current news items on a topic), a collection of links to

other Web sites, a series of book reviews, reports of activity on a project, a journal or diary, a photographic record of an event or activity, or any number of other forms. Most Weblogs display material for the current month or the current week, with older material being archived on the site for browsing and/or searching.³

In the same work, Clyde presents a 2003 survey of library information-science blogs, including sections devoted to blog basics, blogs as sources of information, and a basic content analysis of fifty-seven library blogs. At the conclusion of the chapter analyzing those blogs, Clyde noted that researchers Weaver and Alcock both reported the potential of libraries to use blogs—to interact with library users through such mechanisms as “commenting.” Commenting in blogs allows readers to type responses to the original posts and publish them to the blog record. A conversation among blog authors and readers who comment potentially follows.

Clyde, however, was not convinced that libraries were adopting blogs at any substantial rate, and she urged librarians to consider blogging as a means to communicate and enhance user experience: “By not taking advantage of this simple medium (and doing it well), libraries will be the losers,” she stated in “Are You Serious?” in the *Electronic Library* “Viewpoint” column.⁴

Since Clyde published her research, blogs in general have gained popularity. In *Naked Conversations: How Blogs Are Changing the Way Businesses Talk with Customers*, authors Robert Scoble and Shel Israel argue that blogs are better than traditional one-way marketing venues because they allow instant two-way communication with customers.⁵ They theorize that if a business doesn’t provide a blog where customers can interact via commenting with the blog authors, those customers will find a business that does allow two-way communication.

Not only do blogs bring current trends and issues to the attention of libraries and information scientists, but they can also help practitioners to keep up to date—in other words, reading and participating in library and information science weblogs can be a professional development activity.

Laurel Clyde, *Weblogs & Libraries*

Other library professionals have written about blogs and libraries as well. Paula Hane acknowledged blogs as a “natural for librarians,” while Marylaine Block proclaimed they are a useful communication tool. Terrence Huwe decreed librarians are “born to blog!” And Darlene

Fichter noted in an oft-cited article that librarians can use Weblogs to promote service internally and externally.

Why a Blog at Your Library?

The tools, such as WordPress (www.wordpress.org), are free. The tools enable blog authors to post content to the Web faster than submitting it to a single Web developer or to the over-burdened IT department. Posting to a blog, or *blogging* as it is often called, can create a flow of information to users and allow them to comment on posts if so desired. Librarians can promote their resources to users as well as promote the library—all with a simple, virtually free tool.

I wonder why we are still using e-mail to plan our state conference. If I were more knowledgeable we would be blogging our way to success.

Participant in Michael Stephens's SirsiDynix Webinar, "Weblogs & Libraries," February 2006

Surveying the Biblioblogosphere

What can libraries and librarians do with blogs? Try out any of these types of biblioblogs and ponder how you might use a similar tool in your library.

NEWS AND RESOURCES FROM ALBERTSONS LIBRARY.
LOCATED ON THE BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS.

5.05.2006

Library Open 24 Hours during Finals

If you didn't know, only the first floor of Albertsons Library will be open 24 hours a day starting at 10:00 AM Sunday, May 7, through 6:00 PM Thursday, May 11. Staff will be on hand to provide reference services and check out reserve materials.

Security will be provided by the Boise Police Department; an officer will be on duty in the library all night and can provide escort service. Free coffee will be provided by Student Activities. Check out our Hours page for additional information on West Campus and Summer library hours.

POSTED BY MEMO CORDOVA AT 3:31 PM 0 COMMENTS

5.03.2006

Reference: New Books @thelibrary

Voyager Catalog Albertsons Library is in a constant state of flux and change.

CONTRIBUTORS
MEMO CORDOVA
ELAINE WATSON

CATEGORIES
Research Databases
Reference Resources
Government Documents
Internet Resources
Events
Staff Picks

PREVIOUS POSTS
Library Open 24 Hours during Finals
Reference: New Books @thelibrary
New Library Dean: Marilyn K. Moody
Events: Author Recognition
Library Open 24 hours for Spring Finals
Databases: Treatise Library

Figure 4: The Albertsons Library Blog, <http://albertsonslibrary.blogspot.com>

- **Library News Blogs**—A straightforward catch all of many of the other types listed here—all the news that’s fit to blog, if you will!
- **Marketing & Promotion Blogs**—Announces and promotes activities and programming, might be tied to the library calendar.
- **Materials/Resources Blogs**—Highlights certain parts of a library’s collection. Might focus on fiction, electronic resources, new reference books, just-added DVDs, or similar. The Darien Public Library, Darien, Connecticut, posted this on December 14, 2005:

King Kong opens today and it’s playing right here in town! Now, the question is, are we determined enough to brave these bone-chilling temperatures and leave the homefires to view the mighty beast? Come on! The reviews are so good, this may turn out to be the rare screen event that launches a classic. Besides, the movie, at more than 3 hours long, will give us ample time to thaw and we can enjoy chills of the spine-tingling variety!

Within sight of the Playhouse, right here at the Library, we’ve got some great new titles on DVD. Released yesterday were the action-packed science-fiction thriller *The Island*, and from Canada, *Saint Ralph*, a story of adolescence, endurance, faith, and miracles. Also, now out on DVD is *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*. Dare I say how much I enjoyed this movie? Yes, it’s got some of the crass humor one would expect given the cringe-inducing title, but, this is also a great buddy movie and a sweet, romantic comedy. (Did I mention how funny this movie is?)

“What’s the Forecast for Skull Island?” Darien Public Library Movie Blog, December 2005, www.darienlibrary.org/connections/movies-music/archives/2005/12/post_1.html

- **Service-Oriented Blogs**—A blog devoted to a particular service of a library: gaming programs for teens, etc.
- **Project Blogs**—Chronicles a project: a new building, a long-range plan, a research study.
- **User-Specific Blogs**—Focused on a particular user population: teens, faculty, seniors, graduate students, highlighting library services and news just for that group. Canada-based McMaster University posted this information on its Library News & Events Blog on April 6, 2006:

Health Sciences Library acquires Wiley journal Backfiles

The Health Sciences Library is pleased to announce the purchase of two complete backfiles of Wiley journals:

Neuroscience
Cell and Developmental Biology

The Wiley InterScience Neuroscience Backfile Collection contains more than 100 years of digitized back-issue content across fourteen leading journal titles. The collection provides a backfile resource for core research across the sub-disciplines of neuroscience, and includes full coverage, back to inaugural issues, of seminal titles, including *Journal of Comparative Neurology*, *Annals of Neurology*, *Journal of Neuroscience Research*, and *GLIA*.

The Wiley InterScience Cell & Developmental Biology Backfile Collection contains more than 113 years of digitized back-issue content across thirteen leading journal titles. The collection provides a backfile resource for core research across the discipline of cell and developmental biology, and features full coverage, back to inaugural issues, of seminal titles, including the *Journal of Cellular Physiology and Developmental Dynamics* (formerly *American Journal of Anatomy*).

Funding for these purchases was provided by the Faculty of Health Sciences.

Category: All Library News, Health Sciences, e-Resources, New HSL Resources Contact: Dorothy Fitzgerald | Permalink

McMaster University Library News & Events Blog, <http://library.mcmaster.ca/php/blog.php?id=353&display=full>

Note that the above entry includes information about the resource, a note about funding, a permalink and a contact name.

- **Association & Organization Blogs**—Devoted to news and information about an association or and organization relating to libraries.
- **Conference Blogs**—Could be related to associations or organizations. Devoted to all things related to a conference or meeting.
- **Internal Blogs**—Devoted to internal communication and news. (See “All about Internal Blogs,” page 20).

- **Librarian's Blogs**—Opinions, insights, and information from librarians and library workers, which could be devoted to a specific topic or type of library work.

This year, for the first time, the annual conference will be complemented by a collective blog. Bloggers from all regions, as well as those new to blogging, are invited to contribute. We hope to offer descriptions of and reactions to the conference sessions and social events, as well as other aspects of the Edmonton experience, including weather updates and travel tips.

Connie Crosby, announcing the Canadian Association of Law Librarians Conference Blog

For an overview of all the different kinds of blogs in the Biblioblogosphere, and to add your own library blog, visit Amanda Etches-Johnson's Blogging Libraries Wiki (see figure 5).

All about Internal Blogs

It's easy to point to all the wonderful library blogs out on the Web, but what about internal blogging—communication, conversation, and community built within the library's cyber-walls for staff only? As part of this issue of *Library Technology Reports*, I wanted to make sure I covered the practical and innovative uses of blogs behind the library firewall. (Thanks to all the librarians who spoke to me on this subject!)

In a *Computers in Libraries* article (February 2006), I included this list:

- Internal blogs can be many things:
 - Easy, do-it-yourself intranets
 - A way to reduce e-mail and paper clutter
 - A vehicle to share knowledge and experiences
 - A way to create buy-in for projects
 - A powerful communication tool
 - An easy way to create dynamic Web pages
 - A method to make searchable archives⁶

The Voice of Public Librarianship

Beyond all of our "technobabble" in the Biblioblogosphere, which dear friends you know I love, is a voice so pure that I'm more often than not moved by the words. I get chills. This voice shares exactly what it's like in many public libraries today—working reference and interacting with people.

Michael Stephens, Tame the Web, <http://tametheweb.com>, February 24, 2006

Since late 2004, Lane Medical Library at Stanford University Medical Center has used an external blog to communicate frequently asked reference, information, and policy questions. A move to a single-service desk model—combining reference and circulation—necessitated training sessions "that move"; the library staff members realized they needed an internal blog listing policies and

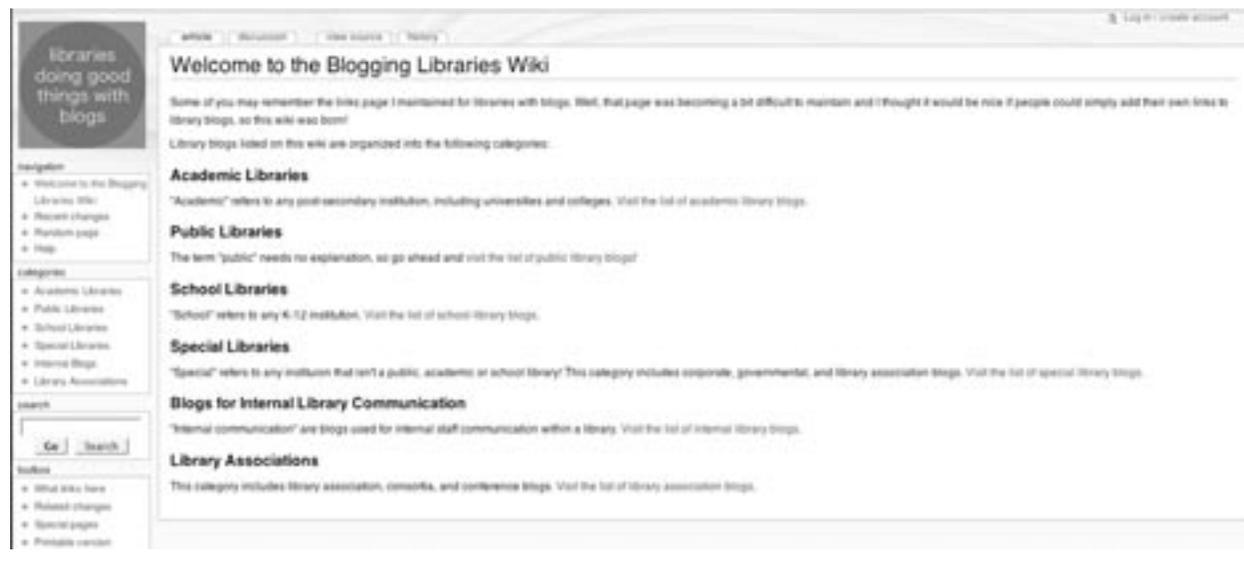


Figure 5: Blogging Libraries Wiki, www.blogwithoutalibrary.net/links/index.php?title=Welcome_to_the_Blogging_Libraries_Wiki

procedures as well as a one-stop shopping clearinghouse of library information.

There is absolutely nothing I could have said to her that would have made any difference at that point. Something personal would have been completely inappropriate and unprofessional, not to mention obviously unwanted. In Reference Interview seminars, we are taught to end with, 'Does this answer your question? Please let me know if I can help you further,' or other wrap-up phrases. But she was so intent on getting the information from that book that I immediately ceased to exist, and those phrases served no purpose. They don't ever cover this in library training, but sometimes, the best thing to say is nothing.

"Not One Word," Feel Good Librarian,
http://feelgoodlibrarian.typepad.com/feelgood_librarian/2006/02/not_one_word.html

"Our intranet was just not cutting it for this type of information—poor searchability, cumbersome to add content, relied on a few people to add EVERYTHING, etc.," Rikke Ogawa, information services librarian at the Lane Medical Library, told me. According to Ogawa, staff members were sending too much content in e-mail messages, and "We needed something more permanent and easily referenced so that people who didn't normally do tech troubleshooting or general reference had something to refer to first instead of just grabbing another staff member who might be working on something else." In February 2005 a staff version of the FAQ—as a blog—went online, specifically to communicate policies and procedures, tech support, and reference.

Internal blogging can replace e-mail in many instances, bulletin-board postings, and even some meetings! Sarah King Steiner, learning commons librarian at Georgia State University Library in Atlanta, explained, "GSU has a really extensive and well-used internal blog system, in fact our main internal blog has become so popular that mass e-mail messages to staff have gone pretty much the way of the dodo." Nicole C. Engard, Web Manager at Jenkins Law Library, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and author of "What I Learned Today" (<http://web2learning.net>), told me an interim internal blog is in place at her library "to keep the staff up to date for a few months now as a primer to the release of our new Intranet, which will include an internal news blog and an infinite number of project-specific blogs."

Another benefit is transparency—letting staff members know how the library's funds are being spent (including money spent on conferences). Some libraries send staff members off to meetings and seminars and never require a debriefing, or written reports disappear into the ether of internal communications. But that's not so for the librarians at George Mason University. The TripNotes Blog (<http://timesync.gmu.edu/tripnotes>) offers a place where staff members report on conferences, presentations, meetings, and other activities. "I finally realized a blogging package was the way to go," said Wally Grotophorst, associate university librarian/systems at George Mason (who planned the Wordpress-based, pilot-project blog), in a post at the Library Systems Office blog (<http://timesync.gmu.edu/wordpress/?p=74>). Brown Bag events or conference debrief presentations didn't fit the bill. "Not everything a staff member attends is worthy of a group meeting or a newsletter," added Grotophorst. "For this particular need, I think a blog hits the sweet spot: Web-based, multiple posters so it pretty much runs itself. . . . It will offer a searchable archive of professional development activity, and it will give staff a bit of practice with blog technology."

As to getting involved in the LIS side of blogging I was thinking about those of us who don't have the time/energy/creative juices to write a blog but have the occasional idea that might like to share with the 'sphere. We can still contribute to the conversation by sharing our ideas, new services, etc. with folks who do blog. I've always had positive experiences passing ideas along to LIS bloggers who in turn share those ideas with their readers.

Glenn Peterson, Hennepin County Public Library, Minnesota

Using these technologies can also offer another important benefit: experience. Steve Backs, Adult Services Department manager at the Monroe County Public Library, Bloomington, Indiana, began internal blogging "within the last year as part of our efforts to create reasons for staff to work with up to date technologies." This may be the most important benefit of internal experimentation and use of new tools. He told me, "At the same time we were assessing computer competencies, and this idea fit in with the efforts to encourage staff to immerse themselves more completely in the tools that our patrons are using."

According to George Mason University-based Grotophorst on the Library Systems Office blog, "I had a

new WordPress blog up and running in about fifteen minutes." Wordpress, available free from (<http://wordpress.org>), is a local server-side solution many libraries use.

Christine Brown, information services and electronic collections librarian at Waterloo Public Library in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, started the INFOSTUFF blog (<http://wplinfostuff.blogspot.com>). "There are some things about Blogger that I don't like, for example there is no way to create subject categories," she says. "I am investigating other options such as WordPress."

Our internal blog provides us with a very effective means to communicate. The openness of the blog lends itself to a strong sense of group-imposed responsibility. Every staff member can read and comment on the blog. Both the writer and the commenter share a responsibility that is policed by the larger community of readers. Snarky or inappropriate questions or comments will be seen as such by everyone. Likewise, questions posed but unanswered, or answered in an unsatisfactory manner, will be available for all to see. So, for both parties, reputations are at stake. As branch manager I cannot simply choose to ignore the comments and questions posted to the blog. Oh, I could ignore them, but at my own peril, and with the loss of any positive reputation or respect. Likewise, staff value that line of communication, and so long as they use the blog in a responsible manner they know that management will respond to them.

Michael Casey, "Communicating with Blogs," Library Crunch, www.librarycrunch.com/2006/03/communicating_with_blogs.html

On Staff Buy-In

Staff buy-in is key to any technology project in libraries. Without the interest, a perfectly designed internal blog will languish on its server, unused and unread. To prevent this, many librarians find inventive ways to ensure success.

"Everyone on the staff contributes in some form," Ogawa (Lane Medical Library at Stanford University Medical Center) explained. "We have content partners that pair techies with less tech-savvy people and good editors with people who weren't familiar with writing for the Web." Lane Medical Library also held an FAQ contest to during the summer and gave prizes to people who entered the most and the best content.

Involving staff is key. Word-of-mouth helps too. "We didn't intend it to become a library-wide site, but I get reports from other departments and our branch that they refer to our blog quite a bit," Sacks reported. "I suppose because this blog is very free form. Any staff can contribute."

Refreshments and festivities work as well. "We are throwing a big party to celebrate the Intranet release so that everyone gets excited about it," stated Engard, who expects her staff will enjoy the internal one-stop information resource. "People here want fewer places to look for information, and I have done that for them."

Sacks (Monroe County Public Library) took a slightly different approach: "I told staff they would be expected to pay attention to the blog and there would be no more announcements to all staff in my department via e-mail. In other words, ignore the blog at your peril." The result? "They have seen the benefit of having fewer e-mail messages from me."

Lessons Learned

"I've learned that if you listen to people's main complaints—in our case communication within the library and having too many places to look for information—and you find a solution that will cut back on mass e-mail messages and put all of the tools they need in one place, they are willing to learn . . . and are excited to learn," Engard explained.

Sacks echoed the sentiment for Monroe County: "By giving staff real reasons to use the technology, we have provided the incentive to stay up to date."

Sometimes the lessons learned are difficult. "The blog hasn't been successful probably because introducing blogs into staff and customer communication was not one of the projects the library had identified for this year," Brown noted. His comments illustrate that buy-in from the top down is equally important. "Until blogs become an official communication method, and there is an expectation and requirement that staff use it, I am unable to assess whether it has been successful or not."

The Social Purpose of the Library Blog

No matter if your blog will be inside for staff or outside for the world at large, it's important to remember the key benefit: a group of people writing about the library's news and events lends a human voice to the organization. With comments enabled, conversation creates a sense of community, "We're working at this . . . together."

Look no further than the Ann Arbor District Library (AADL) Web site (www.aadl.org, see figure 6) to see a touchstone example of the next-generation library Web presence. I believe it is the best example of an innovative online presence created by the librarians and IT staff of the Ann Arbor District Library, Michigan. Through the use of Drupal, an open-source content-management sys-

tem and built with several blogs that feed onto the front page—as well as a dedication to interaction with library patrons—AADL has created a thriving community online that rivals physical community.

On July 5, 2005, AADL launched the new Web site and a new catalog system. At the new Director's Blog, Director Josie Parker posted: "The Website launch is providing an additional forum for public communication with the library. This blog is one of several. The intention is to make regular postings here from administration that will encourage discussion about library policies and services."

Ann Arbor District Library

www.aadl.org

Drupal

<http://drupal.org/>

Drupalib

<http://drupalib.interoperating.info>

Included is the mechanism for registered users of the library to comment—to enter into a conversation with the director and other librarians. Key word here: transparency.

Brian Kenney reported in *Library Journal*: "These blogs aren't sleeping—they are generating plenty of response from the community: 'The response has exceeded our expectations,' said Parker, noting that over 7,000 people have registered to use the site in less than three weeks. 'They are even being used so the public can talk with each other. The library is the public forum.'"

Scanning the AADL site, one finds posts with a few comments and those with many. In the Teens area and on gaming blogs, it is not unusual to see a thriving discussion with more than two hundred or three hundred comments, some of it lighthearted "dissing" or trash-talking gameplay. In our Roadshow sessions on blogs in libraries, Jenny and I have asked the audience: "How many of you can say you have a thriving teen presence inside your library Web site?"

This model will translate. University libraries could implement similar sites and begin conversations with faculty and students. Special libraries could do the same with their clients. Use the implementation strategies and best practices in the next chapters to guide the way.

Blog Innovation: The *Night* Blog

The *Night* Blog—created in the fall of 2005 by Margaret Lincoln, a school media specialist at Lakeview High School in Battle Creek, Michigan—comprises a student-centered discussion of Elie Wiesel's work *Night* (see figure 7). In

School Library Journal, Lincoln described the genesis of this innovative teaching tool:

As the media specialist in charge of coordinating technology related to Lakeview's Holocaust unit, I created a blog so students could exchange their views of *Night* with kids 720 miles away in the English class of Honey Kern at Cold Spring Harbor High School in New York. Lakeview High School English teacher Carol Terburg found the blog to be an effective and engaging teaching tool, giving students the chance to talk to their peers in another part of the country. As a result, kids ended up exploring questions that were essential to their Holocaust lesson without realizing it. For example, one student asked, "How does one dehumanize another person/group?" Terburg says that her students found the blog to be the most meaningful activity related to Wiesel's book.⁷

Early in the website design process, we made the decision that blogs would constitute the nucleus of our dynamic website content. In addition, we wanted to enable commenting on those blogs. We really had no idea what kind of response we would get—of what form that response would take. Just a brief look at our Director's Blog will illuminate the fact that the blogs promote a constant two-way dialogue between our director, Josie Parker, and the public. Of course, making this successful requires a director who is courageous enough to regularly face the public head-on. But if you're not ready to go there, be sure to take a look at some of AADL's other blogs that are staffed by some very clued-in, bright minds. Virtually every material type garners its own blog. New blog entries are added several times a day. Often, blog entries serve to promote what, otherwise, may be obscured by the bigger names. In essence, blogging your material taps into the long tail by putting oft-overlooked titles in front of eyeballs.

John Blyberg, Blyberg.net, www.higheredblogcon.com/index.php/patrons-in-the-drivers-seat-giving-advanced-tool-sets-to-library-patrons

Has blogging continued at Lakeview High School? Lincoln's own colleague at Lakeview High School, Carol

Terburg, also eagerly embraced the blog concept and has been committed to using *The Night Blog* again. She adds, however, “This semester we’ve blogged among ourselves because our *Night* unit couldn’t coincide with our New York friends, but I think it has still been fun and a great learning experience. At first, it was difficult to get less adventurous students to participate in the blog, especially when the task of contributing posts was assigned as homework. When I gave them time from class, they became more than enthusiastic.”

The Night Blog

<http://nightwiesel.blogspot.com>

“Witness to History,” by Margaret Lincoln

www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6302986.html

Terburg used another tactic for the second semester: she encouraged students to do more interacting with one another rather than just responding to the topic. After contemplating the fall 2005 experience and then deciding to apply what *she* learned from it, Terburg reports she challenged students to really learn from *each other*, not just revisit their own ideas. The Lakeview High School administration and parents have generally been supportive with regard to the use of the blog. One student in Terburg’s class this past semester remarked that her father didn’t want her to use her first name. Additionally,

there were three “Jessicas” and two “Kens” in the class so students were permitted to use “pen names” known only to Terburg. A blog permission slip (in accordance with the Lakeview’s AUP) was also signed by parents.

More Blog Innovation: Casey Bisson’s WPopac

Programmer Casey Bisson, who works at the Lamson Library at Plymouth State University in Vermont, has created a prototype mash up of a blog tool and library catalog (OPAC). It brings the best of blogging to the Web interface for a library’s holdings. At the ALA TechSource Blog, Jenny Levine wrote a post about this new system, based on WordPress, and dubbed the *WPopac* (see figure 8):

... every record in the catalog gets its own page, which means it has its own static, permanent link (also known as a “permlink”) that can be indexed by non-library search engines such as Google and Yahoo, as well as tracking of new items in engines like Technorati. Because it’s blogging software, each record also offers comments, trackbacks, and (yes, believe it) tags.

Because WordPress is open-source software and uses an open architecture, anyone with the proper knowledge can write a plugin to modify the content, the display of search results, the display of the individual records, or users can remix content to their hearts’ delight. This means that



Figure 6: In June 2006, the Ann Arbor District Library Web site, which is all blog-based, garnered the “Best of Show” winner slot (Web Page/Home Page, \$6 million+ category) in the annual Best of Show competition sponsored by the Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA).

instead of limiting development to what the vendor offers or to what the programmer (you hopefully have on staff) can do, anyone who knows how to write a WordPress plugin can now enhance the OPAC—which suddenly opens the field to potentially thousands of new helpers.⁸

This is a project to watch closely!

Lamson Library's "WPopac"
www.plymouth.edu/library/opac

"Library 2.0 in the Real World,"
by Jenny Levine
www.techsource.ala.org/blog/2006/01/library-20-in-the-real-world.html

Part 2: Implementing Library Blogs

The best technology initiatives in libraries begin with planning. Use these steps to ensure your blog project—for external or internal blogging—is successful!

Gather a Strong Blog Team

Find folks on your staff who have a knack for writing. Find staff members who might be blogging personally or for another organization. Some of the best library blogs are comprised of multiple voices. If the team works together, in my opinion, the group voice becomes the collective voice of the library.

One of the best ways to do this is give each author an individual login name so each can post under his or her name and develop his or her style and/or "beat." Many library-organization bloggers seem to divide topics into categories or have individual author names. For example, at the SJCLP Blog, you'll find posts about new books, the Academy Awards, *Brokeback Mountain*, and a librarian who participated in a climb of the Hancock Tower for charity. These individuals add their experiences, thoughts, and interests. Collectively, it creates a sense of humanity for the library. A particular author may really engage a particular reader, but it all happens under the umbrella of the library "creating conversation."

I think the best consequence of group blogs in libraries is that they provide their host libraries with a human presence—library users can begin to see the humans behind the libraries' walls (outside of their libraries!).

**STUDENT REFLECTIONS ON NIGHT
BY ELIE WIESEL**

THIS BLOG WAS FIRST CREATED TO ALLOW STUDENTS AT COLD SPRING HARBOR HIGH SCHOOL IN COLD SPRING HARBOR, NEW YORK AND AT LAKEVIEW HIGH SCHOOL IN BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN TO SHARE THEIR REFLECTIONS UPON READING THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR NIGHT BY ELIE WIESEL. STUDENTS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES AND FROM OTHER NATIONS ARE NOW INVITED TO POST COMMENTS.

SUNDAY, MARCH 05, 2006

Remembering a meaningful passage

As you think back to your reading of *Night*, what passage stands out in your memory as being especially meaningful? In your response, first quote and cite the text using MLA form; for example, (Wiesel 42). Next, explain the context of the selected quotation. What is happening at that time in the memoir? Please express your feelings and new understandings while relating your comments back to the passage with a brief summary statement. Thank you for sharing your comments.

POSTED BY MODERATOR AT 9:54 AM 22 COMMENTS

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2006

Resisting Dehumanization

Author Elie Wiesel describes attempts by the Nazis to dehumanize and degrade Jewish people. There were several examples, however, where individuals were able to resist and maintain even a small sense

LINKS

- Holocaust Genocide Project
- Major Holocaust Themes in *Night*
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

PREVIOUS POSTS

- Remembering a meaningful passage
- Resisting Dehumanization
- Introduction to the Holocaust
- Oprah's National High School Essay Contest
- A Memorable Quotation
- Spiritual Resistance and Faith
- Dehumanization
- Holocaust Study

Figure 7: The *Night* Blog, created by school-media specialist Margaret Lincoln, comprises a student-centered discussion of Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night*.

Patrons will get to know authors and their interests. This is important on so many levels, especially in this plugged-in, social online world, where so many folks share information about themselves online.

Want proof of how important the human connection can be in libraries? Click on over to the Feel Good Librarian (http://feelgoodlibrarian.typepad.com/feelgood_librarian) and read about the conversations and connections that go on in that library. I would want her writing for my library blog for sure!

Choose the Software and Host

Choosing blog software is one of the most important steps in implementing a library blog. Software options range from offsite blog host sites (such as Google's Blogger site) to locally hosted (your library's server) and installed blog software. These solutions have both pros and cons.

Hosted, off-site solutions, such as Blogger.com, allow you to dive right in and have a ready-to-go blog in a matter of minutes. Other remotely hosted solutions include Typepad (available for a monthly fee after a trial period) and a free service from WordPress (www.wordpress.com).

In my hands-on blog workshops, I demonstrate to the class—with the workshop participants' help—how to begin a Blogger.com blog as a test, and we work together on two posts. In most cases, this exercise takes less than five minutes. Remember, *off site* means just that—your internal blog is stored at a server outside of your library building.

Pros:

- Easy to configure, with templates and colors
- Access to the blog from any Internet-connected computer
- Allows multiple authors

Cons:

- No categories
- Stored with thousands of other blogs of all kinds, including spam blogs

The other type of software is loaded locally on a library server. On-site solutions, like Movable Type or WordPress, are customizable to the users' content.



Figure 8: Casey Bisson's WPopac, www.plymouth.edu/library/opac

Pros:

- Loads of potential for configuration and added features, called *plugins*
- Full support for categories, keywords, and other snazzy blog features (such as Trackback, a listing of other blogs that have linked to a post)
- Support for multiple blogs and multiple authors

Cons:

- Can be difficult to install and requires some knowledge of servers and programming languages, may not be the best choice for small libraries
- Can cost \$100 or more
- May not include technical support

Open-source software solutions prove to be the way to go for many institutions. With a community of support, various enhancements, the available number of plugins, and installation comprising a relatively simple process, software such as WordPress can be the perfect solution for internal blogging. For more on choosing blog software, see the “Blog Software Smackdown” (at www.sitepoint.com/print/blog-software-smackdown-review).

Create and Customize the Look and Feel of Your Blog

Decide how your blog will look. Try to match colors and theme to your library’s Web site, or put the blog up top as your entry-level page.

Make a decision about your library’s “blog comments” policy or practices. After my February 2006 SirsiDynix Webinar, “Weblogs & Libraries,” an individual asked me about commenting: “What are the reasons that libraries do NOT allow comments to their blogs?” and “If you allow comments can that lead to spamming?”

Wordpress

www.wordpress.org

Blog Software Smackdown

www.sitepoint.com/print/blog-software-smackdown-review

Sure, I wrote on Tame the Web, it can lead to spamming. But there are plugins available to prevent blog spam from getting out of control. Monitoring comments also is an effective way to minimize spamming.

In my opinion, “turning on” comments can be very scary for some librarians. “Oh! What if they start asking us questions?” a librarian said at a recent stop of the Roadshow. It’s good—GREAT, in fact!—if you get questions! But you need to be ready to respond. That’s the

next step for library blogs: conversation! It is time to enter into networked conversations.

On our Roadshow Tour, Jenny often tells the story of talking to Ann Arbor District Library’s head of technology Eli Neuberger about comments. She relates that all of the comments are not moderated at AADL. The IT staff does watch blog posts and comments; only once has the IT staff had to delete a four-letter word. Other than the deletion of the four-letter word and the note, “Edited for publication,” the post is intact.

- **Create your blog and determine the permanent URL:** Build the blog and determine what its URL will be. Make it a “marketable” URL that can be promoted via the various outlets at your disposal.
- **Decide if you want one blog or more:** For many libraries, especially smaller institutions, you may only need one blog. Some small libraries even start with a Blogger blog first—to test the waters. Other larger libraries may want to create separate blogs into different ones about resources, programming, subjects, etc. This could also be done with separate categories in WordPress or Movable Type.

Train Your Staff

Before we launched the first SJCPL blogs, I presented two ninety-minute training sessions for the official team of “Blogging Librarians.” But before the sessions, I developed some objectives for the training first.

After successfully completing this session, participants will be able to:

- Post SJCPL blog entries formatted with bold, italics, and inserted hyperlinks;
- Insert special characters as needed with HTML coding;
- Locate and insert images from our resources for blog entries; and
- Utilize the style sheet and guidelines to ensure consistent posts across the system.

After the training, we created two handouts: a style guide and a blog guidelines sheet. Armed with handouts and logins, we discussed the blog—the mission of the SJCPL blog and how the team could make their posts effective and consistent and still reflect their individual voices.

After discussion, I took them through building a post. I asked all of the blog authors (via e-mail a few days before) to come to the session prepared—with text for a blog post so we could use it to do some live training.

At the session, we discussed choosing a title for the entry, a “headline” that might catch readers’ eyes. We also talked about choosing a correct category and entering text. Together, we visited Amazon.com to look at cover

art, and we examined the library's OPAC on St. Joseph County Public Library's leased content-server. We experimented with images at both sites as well as how to insert them via the tag. Simple HTML commands such as that are very helpful in some blog platforms.

Sample "Blog Guidelines," adapted from SJCP and used in my blog workshops include:

- Have fun!
- Write about things you love or feel strongly about.
- Be real. Avoid jargon or library-speak.
- Have an informal tone. It's not a scholarly essay!
- Spell check!
- Write often! Look for inspiration in your collection, the news, and events going on around you!
- Don't spend too much time on reviews or commentary.
- Posts can be as short as a sentence or two or as long as a few screens. Shorter posts should have photographs or links, longer posts better be really interesting.
- Write in complete sentences and use proper grammar.
- Establish your credibility and your own voice. It is okay for us to employ different writing styles. We are the HUMAN voice of the library, but don't forget that you are speaking as a library employee.

- Be truthful.
- In general, don't post harshly negative reviews. In a real sense, we are promoting library use and materials.
- Cite your sources and provide links to them when possible.
- Respect others' privacy. Don't post information on, or the opinions of, other identifiable people without their permission. Likewise, don't post e-mail addresses or telephone numbers without permission.

In the training sessions at SJCP, those of us involved in the blog's planning, urged the authors to share their opinions with each other. "Feel free to tell the other bloggers when you like or don't like their posts," said Joe Sipocz, author of the guidelines for SJCP and head of the library's blog initiative at that time. "We don't usually get much feedback otherwise," he said, "so let's talk to each other."

Launch with a Soft Opening

Generally, I suggest launching the new blog with a soft opening—put the blog up, add some content, then link to it from your Web portal's opening or index page. After a few days to a couple weeks, start promoting using fliers or

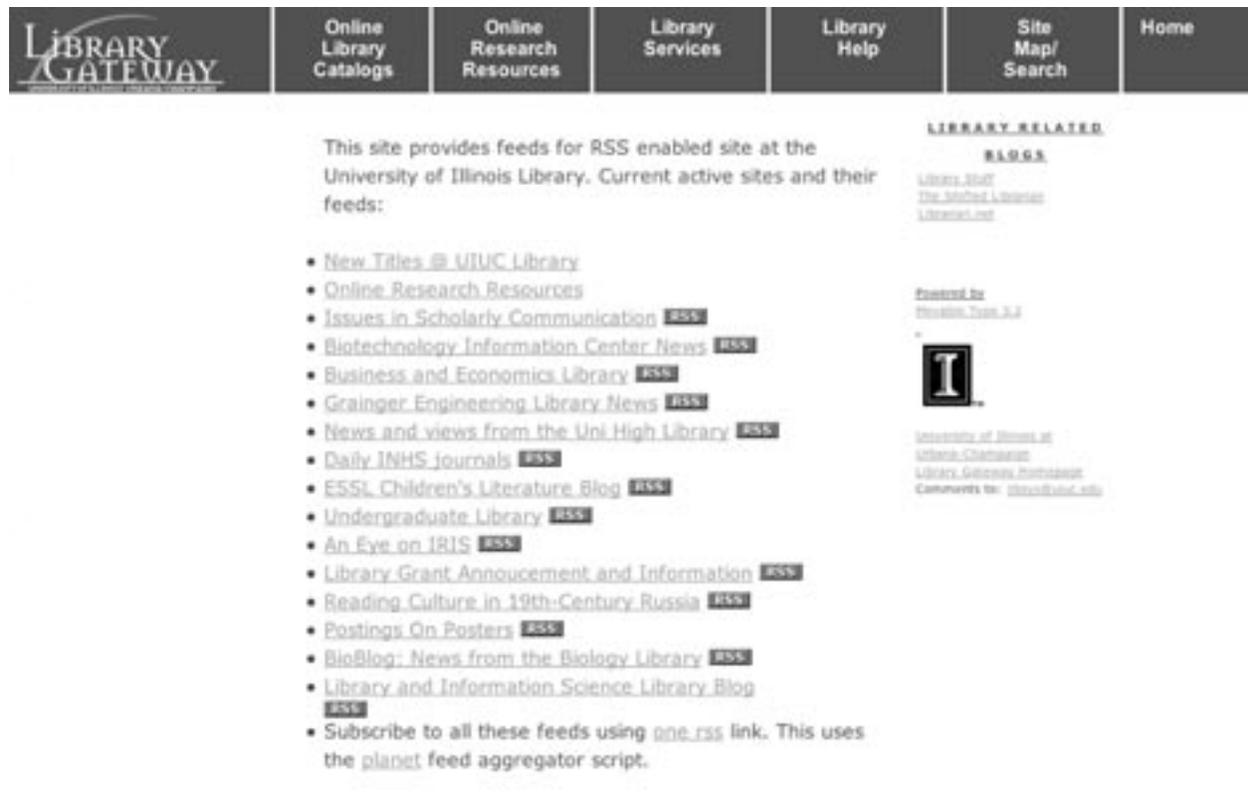


Figure 9: The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library has multiple blogs (and RSS feeds) available from a central page at www.library.uiuc.edu/blog.

bookmarks, for example. I like the idea of a bit of library schwa devoted to the blog: pens, pencils, and the like. The soft opening does two things:

- provides time for any glitches to be discovered; and
- provides staff blog authors with some time to get comfortable in their “publishing” personae.

It’s important to remember that the library blog will be where ninety percent of your new content is “placed.” It needs to be found, the content on it needs to be interesting, and it needs to be sustainable.

At SJCPL, whenever we had a big program or event, I checked the blog to make sure there was coverage there. I kid you not, no one is going to find that little update you made to a page buried three levels deep in your library’s Web site!

Part 3: Best Practices for Library Blogs

These practices are culled from the Roadshow and various blog workshops I’ve taught. They can be a roadmap for library blog success.

- **Read and Evaluate as Many Blogs as You Can.** Start here. Take a look at all of the blogs that interest you. Use the “Blogging Libraries” wiki to find blogs created by similar libraries. Evaluate them and note what you like and what you don’t. This builds a feature set you can translate to your own configuration. As you do this, record what types of posts librarians are writing on their blogs. Can you produce similar content? Inspiration will follow!
- **Learn about the Ethics of Posting to a Blog and Publishing Posts.** Read Karen G. Schneider’s, “The Ethical Blogger” and incorporate it into discussions as you plan for your blog.⁹
- **Find Your Voice and Develop a Mission.** Do not start a blog until you and your blog team have defined the mission and scope of your library blog. Use the various types of library blogs discussed previously in this chapter to decide what your focus will be, and then create a mission from that. You may be asking, “Why a mission?” Not only will it help your authors preserve the voice of the blog, it sets a tone as well: “The authors of the blog care enough to verbalize their mission. This blog is serious.”
- **Create Staff Buy-In.** See Resources section (page 33) for more on this.
- **Focus on Content.** Once you’ve configured colors, graphics, and general “look and feel,” let the software take care of creating the mechanics of the blog. Librarian blog authors should focus on content. Focus on creating interesting, useful posts on new

materials, programs, what’s hot on campus, or out in the world. Reach out to users with what interests them. If people are asking about a particular topic at your reference desk, it may merit a post or two! Scan other library and related blogs for inspiration about content. New books, new movies, programs, and holidays are all reasons to compose a post.

- **Share Authorship.** Depending on your library’s size, this could be a handful of authors—authors from every service point or department, or, in the case of very small libraries, just you! Multiauthor blogs are beneficial to libraries because it disperses the writing duties and, hopefully, ensures that, each week, there are a few new posts. The group should agree on the voice and mission of the blog.

Examples of Stated Blog Missions and Goals

“This blog is a forum for the IU South Bend community to share their opinions on the 2005–2006 One Book, One Campus book Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K. Dick. Readers may also view entries about the 2004–2005 title, War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning by Chris Hedges.”

<http://ee.iusb.edu/index.php?/onebook>

“The goal of this blog is to more effectively communicate information about library resources in the area of business. The primary audience for this blog will be students of the College of Business who need assistance with their projects, although others might find useful information here as well.”

www.library.ohiou.edu/subjects/businessblog/?p=3

- **Post Often and Succinctly.** Users don’t want huge blocks of text. A blog with short posts that get to the point, and a few intermittent longer essays, will work just fine. A library blog will grind to a halt if its authors suffer from “over writing” a brief post about new books. “It’s not a dissertation,” said one the SJCPL blog authors. Write informally but error free. Make your readers want to return or subscribe.
- **Tag Your Posts.** If your blog software supports tagging, your entries will find their way to Technorati and join the growing pool of blog content searched by that engine.
- **Develop a Style Guide.** This should mirror whatever style guide you use for written promotion.

- **Take the Time to Train Staff Members about Posting to a Blog.** Get your bloggers together and give them some training. Let them play! Let them try out posts and talk to each other while they do it. This also creates buy-in for the project.
- **Integrate Blogs into Your Site.** Focus on content, but pay careful attention to creating a seamless environment between the rest of your Web site and your online resources. Link back and forth between the catalog, pointers to leased databases, and your calendar.
- **Create a Feeling of Transparency.** Write about the library's plans and projects. Tell users how you are spending resources. Be honest. Tell them, every step of the way, about whatever new thing you are bringing to the library and why.
- **Be Human (First Person) and Give Good Voice.** One of my favorite posts at the SJCPL blog by AV Librarian Julie Hil says it all: "I love lists. I love to read lists, make lists, and check off lists. So imagine my pleasure when I saw a list of what movies South Bend residents are watching. I was digging around on Netflix.com (the online movie rental site) this afternoon and found a feature that allows you to search by city. So I thought I'd give it a try. Here's what South Bend is renting this week. . . ."10 Put a

human face on the library blog with pictures of the authors. If some staff members are not comfortable with their pictures online, use a graphic or image to represent them. Let them be creative with their pictures. Change them over time.

- **Designate a Point Person to Review Content.** The library blog initiative should be organic. People who have worked together on certain projects may be working to bring those projects together in the library blog. Other staff members may be writing content based on what's happening at the library. Someone, however, should be designated as the point person for the blog. This person could call meetings so blog authors could discuss blog strategy, assign certain types of content to librarians, and this individual *should* be monitoring all the posts to the library's blog. This ensures that even though staff members have discussed the voice and mission of the blog, no posts outside that mission remain.

More Tips for Librarian Bloggers

In a post ("Ten Things a Blogging Librarian Must Do," originally posted June 9, 2004) I published at TametheWeb.com, I included these tips:

Table 1: SJCPL Blog Style Guidelines—December 2005

Use	Don't Use
1, 16, 23 (dates)	1 st , 16 th , 23 rd
10:00 a.m.	10 a.m.
1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd Floor	First, Second, Third Floor
a.m./p.m.	AM, am, A.M./PM, pm, P.M.
Centre Township Branch	CTR, Centre Branch, Centre Library
E-mail, e-mail	E-Mail, EMail, Email, email
Francis Branch	RBF, Robert B. Francis Branch
LaSalle Branch	LAS, LaSalle Branch Library
Lakeville Branch	LKV, Lakeville Branch Library
Main Library – Humphreys Multimedia Room	Multimedia Room
North Liberty Branch	NLB, North Liberty Branch Library
Pre-registration	Preregistration
River Park Branch	RVP, River Park Branch Library
Sights & Sounds, Sights and Sounds	A.V.
SJCPL	St. Joseph County Public Library
Standard Case	ALL UPPERCASE
Storytime	Story Time
Title of Book or Movie	"Title of Book or Movie"
Thursday, December 16	December 16, 2004
Tutt Branch	VMT, Virginia M. Tutt Branch
Website	web site, web-site
www.libraryforlife.org	www.sjcpl.lib.in.us

- Cite your sources. Link to them. It's what this Web and blog thing is all about.
- Post often but have something to say. I'd rather read one or two *super-good* posts than multiple posts that someone puts up because they feel they have to. I used to post every day, but now I focus on what's really interesting to me and what I can comment on.
- However . . . make the commitment to follow through. It pains me to see a new blog go up, get listed here and there, and then never hear from it again. Being a blog author is an investment of time and energy, so commit. If it doesn't work out, pull the plug and either take it down or archive the blog.
- Post about what you're passionate about, and don't be afraid to say what you think!
- Share yourself. I love learning about folks and how they see the world. Different individuals' perspectives may help me understand or change mine. It also adds to the community that is the Blogosphere, and more so, to the World Wide Web community. We are people . . . be yourself!
- Never miss an opportunity to show your administration how well an external library blog is working. Did you get a nice e-mail message from someone who found your blog helpful? Forward it to all involved. It's feedback of the best kind.
- If you are authoring a personal blog, don't do it on your library's dime. Breaks? Lunch? Sure! In the speaking I've done about blogs, I've had numerous library-admin types ask what to do about a blogger on their staff. If it's a library-related blog, discuss what you might do as part of professional development with your supervisor.
- Blog unto others as you'd have them blog unto you. In other words, play nice. I don't want to read flames. I *do* want to read a differing opinion from someone who thought out their points on whatever the topic of the day is.
- Read other blogs for inspiration and Ah Ha! moments. Comment. Chime in on your blog. CITE!
- Learn all there is to know about your blog app and make use of its features. These are good skills to have.¹¹

The screenshot shows the Ohio University Libraries website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the university logo and the text 'OHIO UNIVERSITY Libraries'. Below this are several menu items: 'Find', 'Services', 'Collections', and 'Library Info'. There is also a search bar and a link to 'ASK A LIBRARIAN'. The main content area is titled 'Business Blog' and has a sub-header 'Tips, Tricks, and Tools for the Business Researcher'. A featured article is titled 'Consumer Spending on Cultural Events' and includes a text block and a list of resources. A sidebar on the right contains an 'About:' section with a photo of Chad F. Boeninger, a 'Your Librarian:' section with contact information, and a 'Categories:' section.

Figure 10: Librarian Chad Boeninger's Business Blog at Ohio University Libraries (www.library.ohiou.edu/subjects/businessblog).

Podcasting: Add Audio

Curious about podcasting? Ready to offer audio content to your users? Explore the tips and links here, and be sure to visit Greg Schwartz's Open Stacks Blog (<http://openstacks.net/os>).

Library Podcasting Examples

Buffalo State College (NY) Podcasts
www.buffalostate.edu/podcasts.xml

Kankakee Public Library
www.lions-online.org/Podcasts.html

Lansing Public Library (IL)
www.lansing.lib.il.us/podcast.htm

Pritzker Military Library (IL) Podcasts
www.pritzkermilitarylibrary.org/podcast

Thomas Ford Memorial Library (IL) Click-a-Story
www.fordlibrary.org/clickastory

Ten Points on Podcasting in Libraries

1. Podcasting could be called “audio blogging.”

Podcasting is uploading an MP3 audio file to a blog post and syndicating it out via RSS 2.0 or an ATOM feed. Aggregators such as Bloglines or Apple's iTunes Music Store can subscribe to podcasts and automatically pull in new podcasts when they become available. You do not need an iPod to listen to podcasts. Any MP3 player or computer that can play MP3 files will work.

2. **Libraries are using podcasts to share and syndicate audio content.** Take a look at *Listen Up!*, the monthly news and information podcast from the Decatur Campus Library of Georgia Perimeter College to see university library podcasting in action. The podcasts include news about the library, services, resources, and special guests. Find it at <http://gpclibraryradio.blogspot.com>.

3. **Podcasting adds even more dimension to the library's voice.**

4. **Podcasting requires equipment you probably already have.** Most new computers come equipped with the hardware needed to record audio. A free software solution is the open-source application Audacity for Macs or PCs (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net>). Add an inexpensive microphone, find a quiet room in your library, shut the door and your podcasting studio is complete! Apple's Garage Band, v.3 (part of the iLife '06 suite of Apple i-apps) comes with built-in support for producing slick podcasts as well.

Podcasting in academic libraries is still so new that its importance and ultimate utility has yet to be determined. This has not stopped a number of institutions from experimenting with the technology, adapting it for a variety of uses ranging from library tours to database tutorials to recordings of library events. More than any of the suite of social software applications that exist today, such as blogs, wikis, and IM, podcasting adds a new dimension to the library, giving it the opportunity to create a personality for itself, its services, and its greater community.

Chris Kretz, Dowling College, www.higheredblogcon.com/index.php/learning-to-speak-creating-a-library-podcast-with-a-unique-voice

5. **Podcasting takes time and a commitment to the service.** For a library to produce audio content (monthly? weekly?) there will need to be a serious investment of time and staff, at least at first. It must be a priority. Promotion is a key as well. Do not spend valuable staff time and resources if you are not promoting your podcasts. Track usage via download statistics and gather anecdotal evidence.

6. **Content abounds in the library setting for podcasting.** Have a visiting author? Will guest speakers sign off on a “podcast clause” when visiting libraries? Or will they agree to be interviewed for the library's feed? This is marketing for your library and publicity for the person involved, so they will probably be happy to do it; however, make sure that your “interviewer” is skilled in asking questions and has time to put together a brief intro and set of questions. Other ideas for podcasting (or videocasting, which may be on the horizon for some libraries, via librarian David King, Kansas City Public Library):

- Perfect for augmenting a teen-driven Web site
- Professors can archive/aggregate course lectures
- Oral histories
- Online storytimes
- Local storytellers telling a story
- Internal training
- External training
- Promotion of library events: interviews, music programs¹²

7. **Having presence in iTunes is a good thing** (see appendix 1).

8. **Think about loaning podcast devices at your library.** Ponder loaning devices—iPods or other media

players—at your library and include library-created podcasts on them. Librarians could create audio tours of their buildings, training for electronic resources that guide users click by click, or marketing announcements and general news-item podcasts.

Bloggers and to a lesser extent teens who read blogs are a particularly tech-savvy group of Internet users. They have more technological tools such as cell phones and PDAs and are more likely to use them to go online. Not only do they live in technologically rich households, but they are more likely to have their own computer at home and to be able to use it in a private space. They help adults do things online. Most strikingly, they have more experience with almost all online activities that we asked about. Bloggers are more likely than non-bloggers to engage in everyday online activities such as getting news, using IM or making online purchases, but content creating and sharing activities are the areas where bloggers are far ahead of non-bloggers.

Pew Internet & American Life Report, "Teen Content Creators and Consumers," www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/166/report_display.asp

9. **Involve your users.** Remember, Web 2.0 is all about participation. Some libraries have partnered with patrons, students, faculty members, or clients to assist in the creation of audio content. Feel free to create some new service that brings librarians and library users together. Look to teens and young adults as a starting point. Libraries such as Thomas Ford Memorial Library in Western Springs, Illinois, have involved teens in recording book reviews for the library's Web site.
10. **Create a podcast studio or digital creation station(s) in your library.** It's very likely that this is most important thing we could do for our current and future users. Provide them with the access to the technology and the space to collaborate on the creation of new content. Teens, students, and other users might be looking for a space to record podcasts, edit digital video, and mix up and mash up content. This very well may be a future role of libraries. We need to create spaces in our libraries for collaboration and so that users can gain experience with Web 2.0 tools.

Thomas Frey offers the same suggestion in his piece on the future of libraries:

Experiment with creative spaces so the future role of the library can define itself. Since the role of the library 20 years from now is still a mystery, we recommend that libraries put together creative spaces so staff members, library users, and the community at large can experiment and determine what ideas are drawing attention and getting traction. Some possible uses for these creative spaces include:

- a. Band practice rooms
- b. Podcasting stations
- c. Blogger stations
- d. Art studios
- e. Recording studios
- f. Video studios
- g. Imagination rooms
- h. Theater-drama practice rooms¹³

More Resources on Blogs

Blog Bibliographies

Kairosnews: A Weblog for Discussing Rhetoric, Technology and Pedagogy, <http://kairosnews.org/blogbib>

BlogBib: An Annotated Bibliography on Weblogs and Blogging, with a Focus on Library/Librarian Blogs, <http://blog-bib.blogspot.com>

Resources on Blogs and Libraries

Steven Bell, "Where the Readers Are," *Library Journal* 130, no. 16 (2005): 8-14, <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6269278.html> (accessed June 1, 2006).

Rebecca Blood, "How Blogging Software Reshapes the Online Community," *Communications of the ACM* 47, no. 12 (2004): 53-5, <http://portal.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1035165> (accessed June 1, 2006).

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Appendix 1:

Kankakee (Illinois) Public Library's podcast presence in Apple's iTunes. Notice the user comment (customer review) that commends the library for capturing "the experience of all people in your community and share them with the world." (www.lions-online.org/Podcasts.html)

The screenshot shows the iTunes application window with the Kankakee Public Library Podcast page. The interface includes a sidebar with navigation options, a main content area with a podcast description, customer reviews, and a list of episodes.

Podcast Description:
 The Kankakee Public Library includes a periodic PodCast from the Library featuring interviews and news, plus audio from some of our Library programs. You will hear various authors, get upcoming program descriptions, library news, and hear from local newsmakers.

Customer Reviews:
 Average Rating: ★★★★★
 Interviews: ★★★★★
 by unfiled
 great idea guys - what a neat way to capture the experience of people in your community and share them with the world.

Podcast Episodes:

#	Name	Time	Artist	Release Date	Description	Price
1	Arlo Guthrie Was Good Audio on...	1:12:00	Arlo Guthrie	11/18/06	This podcast was recorded December 8...	Free
2	Christina Salter Drexler Summer...	1:14:52	Christina Salter	12/11/06	On February 13, 1941, Ash Wednesday...	Free
3	An Evening With Sara Lewis	1:05:00	Sara Lewis	1/17/06	During the talk, Mr Lewis spoke of dem...	Free
4	A Conversation With Sara Lewis II	1:13:38	Sara Lewis	2/17/06	Bob Monk had, popular author of The U...	Free
5	The Underground Railroad in Illin...	1:00:18	John H. Coatsworth	1/24/06	Noted author and historian Clarence T...	Free
6	Burlington Museum Founder Dr. Ma...	1:15:20	Dr. Maxine M. Hall	5/1/06	The Kankakee Public Library was honor...	Free
7	Sara Lewis: Her Life and Work	1:18:07	Sara Lewis	12/20/06	Sara Lewis, two-time Kennedy Medal r...	Free
8	2006 Teen Author Day	1:02:02	Various Artists	1/1/06	Tap the final time from the library team...	Free
9	Wanda Sue and her Books for Child...	1:11:58	Wanda Sue	1/1/06	Noted children's author Wanda Sue visit...	Free