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"Clogging?" "No, I said, West Virginia Blogging."

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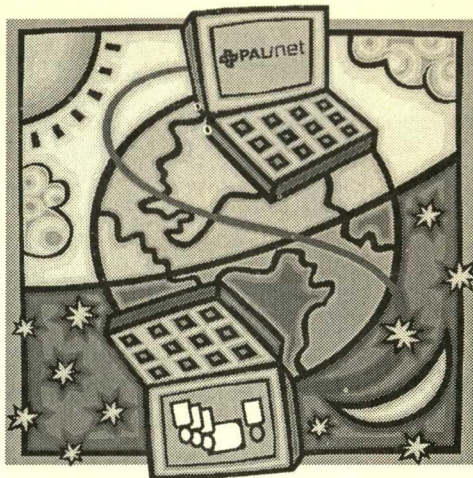
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"Clogging?" "No, I Said, West Virginia Blogging."

By Beth Jane Toren
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American culture is saturated with blogs, and libraries are no exception. West Virginia Libraries are doing amazing things with blogs. Check out the following places to begin if you are interested in jumping into the free Blogisphere.

What do blogs have to offer?

Blogs offer the latest news, lively discussion, the ability to check facts, unique personal voices, new perspectives, virtual communities, and online support: in short, communication. You can post something instantly on a blog, change or remove it moments later, or respond to a user's comment immediately after it's been posted.

You can find blogs for any topic of interest to you. To begin an exploration into the blogiverse, try going to <http://www.bloglines.com/> and doing a keyword search for your personal interest. Blogs about librarianship are excellent for leisurely professional reading, for they often summarize relevant issues and provide cites and links to related resources.

How can blogs help my library?

Librarians use blogs to promote services, give students library advice, share information resources with colleagues, keep library staff aware of current standards and issues, share library news with users, distribute and annotate articles with users and employees, provide reader's advisories and subject guides, and increase staff participation. All of this can be accomplished with minimal effort.

For examples of library blogs, you can explore blogging libraries at:

http://www.blogwithoutalibrary.net/?page_id=94 or the directory at DMOZ, http://dmoz.org/Reference/Libraries/Library_and_Information_Science/Weblogs/.

Like anything on the Internet, there are the good, the bad, and the ugly. For a taste of the best, try some of these most popular library-related blogs:

The Shifted Librarian

<http://www.theshiftedlibrarian.com/>

Shifting Libraries at the speed of byte!

Librarians' Index to the Internet

<http://lii.org>

New and newly-discovered Web sites for librarians and everyone else, updated every Thursday morning. Also an excellent searchable web directory.

ResourceShelf

Resources and News for Information Professionals

<http://www.resourceshelf.com>

—continued on page 16

Blogging —continued from page 15

Library Stuff

<http://www.librarystuff.net>

The library weblog dedicated to resources for keeping current and professional development

librarian.net

<http://www.librarian.net>

Putting the rarin back in librarian since 1999

What West Virginia Libraries are Doing with Blogs

Here is a selection of WV Library blogs:

The Elbin Library Blog at West Liberty State College

<http://library.wlsc.edu/>

On the day I visited this blog, I found links to Internet Resource Guides and the Library Instruction Schedule, along with the library hours for the day, the Reference Desk phone number, and a notice about the summer hours. There was a note about the Citation Machine link on the Ready References menu being inactive. They also have a library instruction blog at <http://biblioteacher.blogspot.com/>.

This blog provides immediate communication with users – it even said “good morning” as if communicating in real time.

Hardway Library News blog

<http://bsclibrary.blogspot.com/>

“A glance at the latest library news, notes on new books, and useful links.” Their goal is to inform their users and to demonstrate commitment to communication.

Content for their users included updates on wireless service in the library, information about a book club, summer hours, and overdue notices. A nice post also discussed their Chat Reference Service – a good example of using a blog to promote library services.

Research Blog at Marshall University Libraries

<http://murefdesk.blogspot.com/>

“Designed to help Marshall University students with their research needs. Posts are by MU librarians.”

Seven Librarians are able to post to this blog that gives Marshall students library and research tips. Students are notified about database changes, search engine updates, tax information, research assistance, scanning facilities, and more.

West Virginia University Libraries News

<http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/news/>

Changes in library computer login procedures were the top story when I checked this blog. The headline of the main story appears on the home page. The link takes you to the rest of the story and all of the older posts.

Six Librarians can post library-related stories to this news blog. The content ranges from press-releases to announcements about the latest Reference acquisition. Older news is archived, and all of it is divided into categories. It is also searchable. This blog is aimed at all library users.

WVU Libraries Reference Services Blog

(Restricted Intranet URL) <http://intranet.lib.wvu.edu/departments/reference/>

This blog is primarily for the Reference Department workers who staff the desk, but all employees in the Department benefit from keeping up with it. The blog takes over the function of leaving notes and messages for the other workers at the desk. Here are the things listed as suggestions to “Please share:”

- what is happening at the desk
- interesting URLs
- interesting reference questions & answers
- technical difficulties (printers etc.)
- assignment alerts

—continued on page 17

Blogging —continued from page 16

- anything you want to share with the Department

Content examples included keys to trouble-shooting the new keyboards and tips for the helping users with the new I.D. numbers.

Technical Side:What are my options?

Blogs are easy to set up and free on the web. I'm only including two systems here to keep it simple. Here are some places to get started:

Blogger: create a free blog in three easy steps

<http://www.blogger.com/start>

This keeps your blog on their server. This is the simplest solution.

WordPress: free with nice features but requires techie experience

<http://wordpress.org/>

You must host this software on your server; it requires other software to back it up.

If you want to spend more time researching further free options, see the "Free Blog Software/ Hosting" article on About at: <http://weblogs.about.com/od/weblogsoftwareandhosts/a/topfreeblogs.htm>

Blogs are a great way to communicate. There are plenty of things we want to tell our users. Now if we can just project it on the wall as they walk in!