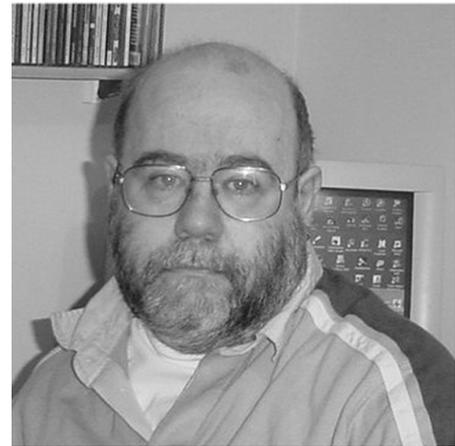


# Key issue

## What are weblogs?

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A weblog is a web site or page that is the product of (generally) an individual or non-commercial origin that uses a date-limited or diary format, and which is updated either daily or at least regularly with new information about a subject, range of subjects, or personal details.

This information may have been written by the author of the log, obtained from other sources on the Web, contributed by others, or a combination of those. They are consequently usually topical and timely, and can be viewed as a developing commentary on a situation, event or subject.

Weblogs are also referred to as logs, Blogs, Web logs and so on. There appears to be no single standard way of referring to them. There is a variety of different types of weblog, all doing different things. One of the single most popular weblogs is Slashdot at <http://www.slashdot.org> which is the work of programmer and graphic artist Rob Malden and some of his colleagues. Slashdot is an extended weblog, in that it carries discussion threads that are contributed to by various individuals, and on many subject areas, such as games, hardware, programming and so on. To this extent, it may appear to be more akin to a portal, rather than a diary.

At the other end of the spectrum is the Weblog of Jenny Levine, the 'shifted librarian' at <http://www.theshiftedlibrarian.com> which is the personal weblog of an information professional.

Despite their differences, they have several key elements in common:

- there is a personal point of view
  - there is an opportunity to contact/collaborate with the author
  - viewers will find topical material that will (usually) relate to them
  - issues of the day are generally those that are discussed in detail
  - they respond to, rather than create, news
  - they are written in a format with the most recent material at the top, while older material is further down the page, or stored in an archive, which is almost like reading backwards through a book.
- content changes on a daily (sometimes hourly) basis

### Brief history of weblogs

It could be argued that the first web pages, the creation of Tim Berners-Lee, were themselves a weblog while he was documenting the origins and growth of the environment he was creating.

However, it has only been towards the end of the last decade, 1997–98, that people started to create weblogs. The name 'weblog' was coined by Jorn Barger in December 1997. In 1998 the first list of weblogs was created at <http://www.camworld.com/>. Another listing, <http://www.jjg.net/portal/tpoowl.html> listed those weblogs that existed in the early days. This listing has not been updated since 12 October 2000, so it is of little use now as anything other than historical value. Peter Merholz (<http://www.peterme.com>) established the pronunciation 'web-blog', which then was shortened to blog, and the author or editor in turn became a 'blogger'.

Weblogs then began to expand as more people created them. Brigitte Eaton produced an early listing of every weblog that she was aware of at <http://portal.eatonweb.com/> and the listing currently stands at 11,654.

### How do you find weblogs that you want to read?

#### *Using a general search engine*

The easiest approach is simply to go to Google or some other search engine and run a search for weblog <insert subject area of interest>. For example, a search at Google for 'weblog librarian' results in over 50,000 results, so you might want to add in a few more terms to narrow that down a little further. Google and Yahoo also have directories that cover weblogs.

#### *Using a blog-specific search engine*

Daypop (<http://www.daypop.com/>) searches 35,000 news sites, weblogs and RSS feeds for current events and breaking news. It crawls 'the living web' daily, and search options exist to allow searchers to search News, Weblogs, both or RSS headlines. All the usual search options are available – "phrase searching with quotes" +including –excluding. You can also search for a specific link to a URL with `link:www.mysite.com` or in the Advanced search function, limit to a country or language. There are also options to check the top 40 links, top news stories, top posts, word bursts, news bursts, and top weblogs.

Blogdex at <http://blogdex.media.mit.edu/search.asp>  
This is very basic in terms of search techniques and syntax.

BlogStreet at <http://www.blogstreet.com/>

This search engine lists and indexes the way that blogs link to each other in neighbourhoods, so it can be quite useful in terms of finding other blogs that you might like to read based on those that you do already. It also allows you to search the top 10,000 blogs, view the top 100, and see the most important blogs. It indexes 138,000+ blogs.

Detod at <http://blawgs.detod.com/>

Specialised engine for searching legal blogs. As well as a search facility it also lists top stories (current to a few minutes).

BlogSphere news aggregator at:

<http://www.alpern.org/weblog/php/blogsearch/writeup.html>

#### *Weblog directories*

These are another way of finding the right blog(s) for you. These directories work in the same way that Yahoo does – listing types, rather than being a search engine. A site that is primarily designed to list weblogs by, for or about librarians, for example, is at:

<http://www.libdex.com/weblogs.html>

Weblogs specifically of interest to librarians and others in the serials chain include:

Acme Book News:

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

BookNews:

<http://futureofthebook.com/>

Engineering libraries – news for:

<http://www.enlib.info/>

Eprintblog (academic bias):

<http://eprintblog.crimsonblog.com/>

Liblog – library- and technology-oriented blog:

<http://www.rcpl.info/services/liblog.html>

Library notes – news and events of interest:

<http://www.librarynotes.net/>

Lisfeeds news and events of interest:

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

Manitoba Library Association weblog:

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

Research Buzz – search engines and databases:

<http://www.researchbuzz.com/news/index.shtml>

Scholarly Electronic Publishing weblog:

<http://info.lib.uh.edu/sepb/sepw.htm>

Phil Bradley's blog at:

<http://www.philb.com/blog/blogger.html>

### News and weblog aggregators

One of the most powerful features of most weblogs is that you can read the content, or at least the headlines, without actually having to visit the weblog yourself. An aggregator will visit the log on your behalf, collect and collate all the headlines and display them for you. You are then in a position to skim through these headings and, when you see an article or item that interests you, click on the link and view the entry. This obviously saves you a lot of time and means that you can skim through many more weblogs that you would normally be able to visit on a regular basis.

An aggregator tool that I prefer to use is Amphetadesk at

<http://www.disobey.com/amphetadesk/>

It's fast, quick, effective and free. It's a download and sits on your desktop.

### Creating your own weblog

Once you have looked through some weblogs the urge to produce your own can become almost overwhelming! Another nice thing with weblogs is that this is actually extremely easy to do, since there are many weblog sites that will set up a system for you to allow you to post, and they will even host your content for you. Alternatively, you may wish to host the weblog on your own site (which is the way I run mine), and some utilities will allow you to do this as well.

Examples of blogging services include Blog Easy (<http://www.blogeasy.com/>) which is a simple, easy and free way to quickly create your own blog, and Blogger (<http://www.blogger.com/>) which is also free and the one that I use myself. Blogger can host your site, or it can be configured to update on your own server. It's very simple and easy to set up; they provide various templates for you to use (or you can create your own) and the updating process is very simple. Google recently purchased the company, and if you also use the Google toolbar, there is a button that allows you to publish directly to your log. I find this particularly useful since I spend a lot of my time wandering around the Web, and when I find a page that I want to comment on, or an article

that I want to alert my readers to, a simple click of the button brings up a small window for me to add a link and make whatever comment I choose. Consequently it's very easy for me to add material without interrupting my web browsing any more than is necessary.

### Further sources of information

Blogging @ your library – feature article:

<http://www.sls.lib.il.us/reference/por/features/2003/blogging.html>

Stephen Cohen's presentation on an introduction to RSS and blogging:

[http://www.librarystuff.net/presentations/neasist04282003\\_files/frame.htm](http://www.librarystuff.net/presentations/neasist04282003_files/frame.htm)

*Guardian* article on working with newsreaders:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/online/story/0,3605,781838,00.html>

*Guardian* article on weblogs. Nice, concise, to the point and with a good listing of weblogs:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/weblog/special/0,10627,744914,00.html>

A short history of weblogs:

[http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog\\_history.html](http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html)

Matt Maldre's comparison of blog systems if you want to create your own.

<http://www.spudart.org/etc/blogresearch/>

RSS info. Good collection of aggregators, some of which I've not mentioned. Worth a look:

<http://blogspace.com/rss/readers>

RSS technical specifications that you probably don't want to know about!

<http://web.resource.org/rss/1.0/spec>

Danny Sullivan (Searchenginewatch) article on weblogs:

<http://www.searchenginewatch.com/sereport/article.php/2175281>

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■ **Phil Bradley** is an information professional of many years' standing, and is currently an Internet consultant. Phil runs many courses (including one on weblogs), speaks at various conferences at home and abroad on Internet-related issues and writes and designs web sites for clients. He is also the author of several books on the Internet, notably *The Advanced Internet Searcher's Handbook* and

*Getting and staying noticed on the web*, both published by Facet Publishing. Phil writes his own weblog which can be seen at: <http://www.philb.com/blog/blogger.html> and he is available for consultation if you are considering creating your own or using one in your marketing strategy.

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