

Tame The Web: Libraries and Technology

A Weblog by Michael Stephens

[« CNN's Top 25 \(because I so love numbered Lists!\) | Main | That Podcasting is so hot right now! »](#)

10 Things I've Learned as a Blogging Librarian

Today is the two year anniversary of Tame the Web. Inspired to start blogging by Steven Cohen in March 2003, TTW went live via the iBlog software on April 1, 2003 from the [Panera Bread](#) in Mishawaka, Indiana via my laptop. [Here's that first incarnation.](#) And here are ten things I've learned in 2 years of being a Blogging Librarian:

Ethics and Guidelines Count

[Ask Karen, she gets it more than any LIS Blogger I know.](#) Not only are we writing and thinking about libraries but we are promoting ourselves, our jobs and the profession. Next time I bump into Michael Gorman, I'll ask him to not only take a look at TTW but at [Free Range Librarian](#), and [Walking Paper](#), and [Dave's Blog](#) and say "Look at these articulate, thoughtful folks who mind their Ps and Qs and work so hard to improve library services." What ethics do you blog by? What guidelines for your work do you use?


[Read this post for all of my thoughts on blogging guidelines.](#)

Your Blog = Your Presence (and spell stuff right please)

Typos plague us all. I'm the first to admit it: when I get a little excited and write furiously (with bad wrists, a bad neck and my patented 2 finger method), I make mistakes. I appreciate the IM or e-mail from a colleague that says "Hey you have a typo in that post about [iPods at South Huntington](#)." We all need editors.

Don't be sloppy. Take a look at that hasty post and FIX IT. Our blogs represent us -- our professionalism and our interest in LIS. If you put your blog on your resume or CV, it darn well better be well-written and focused. This is a big part of your presence. First thing I would do with a resume that cited a blog is to take a look! (and then Google the person too!)

The LIS Blogosphere is a Thriving Virtual Community

Howard Rheingold's The Virtual Community, published in 1993, defined the Internet as an interconnected computer network utilizing Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) to link people all over the globe in open discussions. He defined "virtual community" as  social aggregators that

emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace.◆

Researchers Henri and Pudelko also argued that all virtual communities are learning communities by applying definitions cited from the work of Wenger who studied social learning theory within communities of practice in the physical world. Expanding on his work and utilizing their typology, Henri and Pudelko define three principal components of social interaction and information exchange within online communities: the goal of the community, the methods of creating the group, and the evolution of the community over time. They also defined descriptors for each component of virtual communities. I think the LIS Blogosphere fits very nicely under their heading of "Community of Practice"

Stems from an existing, real community of practice

Professional practice development through sharing knowledge among members

Appropriation of new practices and development of involvement

Sounds like a lot of what goes on between LISNews, the Shifted Librarian and all of the other LIS Blogs I keep track of.

Much has also been written about the strength of virtual communities in the real world as well as the aforementioned evolution of the community. Never before had it become so clear when many folks in the LIS Blogosphere crossed over into the real world in one place: [Computers in Libraries 2005](#). It was fascinating to meet people I knew via their online presence and interact with them. There was much discussion, merriment, drama, knowledge exchange, learning, and hootin' and hollerin' - just like we all lived in the same town or belonged to the same extended family. We may not always agree..we may not always get along...but what a thriving group of folks. It did my heart good to meet bloggers like [Chad](#) and [Michael Pate](#) and chat with them in the hotel bar.

Libraries should be Blogging

At my talk on "Optimizing Technology in Libraries" -- absolutely hands down one of my favorites to present - I made a point that one way to create staff buy-in is to blog about a project. From 6 rows back, an audience member said (rather sternly) : "**BLOGGING takes time! Who has time to do that?**" I must admit I lost a little steam with that and realized our work is nowhere near done as "blogvangelists." ([Thanks Will](#))

Blogs serve a purpose in libraries. The software -- simply a Content Management System (CMS) of sorts -- takes care of the dirty work and let's us focus on CONTENT. What could be more wonderful than that. Sometimes

I think the name has a bad wrap. Maybe at CIL I could have said "Let your staff and public know by implementing a CMS and posting to it regularly."

Jenny turned me on to a great term: transparency. That's letting the public know what the library is doing, how we do it and what it means for our users. This is hot stuff. Here's where blogging libraries can really fly: telling stories to their users about their services, programs and everything else we do. AND IT'S EASY!

[Look at what libraries are doing with blogs!](#) It's incredible. As LIS Bloggers, we can sell that message and improve services internally and externally.




Librarians Want to Learn and Share

How wonderful is it that we can participate in communities of practice and exchange ideas and share our best tips. I think one reason LIS Blogging thrives is because we like to see what other folks are doing. We like to stay in touch and informed. We share. This is not corporate cut-throat politics here... it's give and take. Nice.

Look at the resources at [WebJunction](#), the [Blended Librarian](#) and [LISNews!](#) Lordy but we have some help in what we do. Look at what [Aaron does with tech](#), or what [Chris is doing in his library](#), or [David with his Listen Up! blog](#) or the wisdom of [The Shifted Librarian](#).

This stuff isn't copyrighted folks (but there may be a creative Commons license!). Use it! I was so tickled at CIL 2005 to give our training workshop participants a CD with eight ready-to-go technology training classes they could take home. Same goes for blog stuff. Print a post, pass it out at a meeting, use it as a discussion piece. Then blog about it.

Blogging can be a Muse, a Catharsis, an Outlet and a Pure Document of Life

Nardi and friends did some great research and found these four motivations for blogging: blogging to document life experience:   "log your being," blogging as commentary such as a conference or a product, blogging as catharsis allowing writers to protest, shout, explore personal issues, and grief and finally, blogging as muse:  "Thinking with computers."

Blog posts found here have been the genesis of presentations and articles. All in all, they document my professional/academic life since April 2003. This blog and the LIS Blogosphere has also influenced my research interests and what may become my dissertation. If..when..I'm in the classroom, I'll be talking about the years that blogging changed libraries! Wow.

Librarians Can Tell Good Stories

I'm all about [Joan Durrance's *How Libraries and Librarians Help*](#). It addresses how we need to tell our libraries' and our users' stories to better market libraries and keep us relevant. Durrance talks about statistics versus stories and how stories bring that human element to the library.

I think librarians like to tell stories, not only in storytime, but in blogging. We blog stories about technology, the reference desk and support services.

Remember Librarians Gone Wild? Remember the Male Librarian Centerfold? The front line anonymous library blogger is a rare breed these days, it seems to me. I do miss them. Glad to see [Ref is still grunting](#). I'm glad we have [The Feel Good Librarian!](#)

Anyone can have a Voice from Anywhere

In the LIS Blogosphere, there's room for loads of voices. I like that part as well. I like the fact that someone in a tiny little library in Podunk, USA who serves 500 people can blog about his or her experiences and add it to the mix. Think of the blogs you read - probably a pretty diverse group of folks from many backgrounds, locales and states of mind. Yes, a lot of us write about technology but still there's a lot of variety from the hardest of the hard coders to softest of the soft skills people person.

Cite Your Sources (Always)

Just sayin'... see below.

Blogging Librarians Make a Difference

How else would so much information move so quickly to folks tuned in and turned on to RSS or bloglines. The Gorman thing exploded in the LIS Blogosphere. Blogs like RFID in Libraries offer news and a whole lot more. I'd go there first and spend some time before even thinking about it!!

What does the future hold then for the blogging librarian? Could we sway ALA elections? Yes. I'll never vote again until I know where each candidate stands on new tech trends in libraries, thank you very much. Could we save a library from closing? Maybe if our posts were picked up by the bigger blogs and media. Can we help librarians and libraries thrive, remain relevant and meet users on their own turf? I hope so.

Henri, F., & Pudelko, B. (2003). Understanding and analyzing activity and learning in virtual communities. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* (19), 474-487.

Nardi, B., Schiano, D., Gumbrecht, M., & Swartz, L. (2004). Why we blog.

Communications of the ACM, 47 (12), 41-46.

Rheingold, H. (1993). *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. New York: HarperPerennial.

I've proofed this twice. Just want to thank all the bloggers that have touched me, supported me and given advice. You know who you are, you dear souls! Rock On!

Posted by Michael on April 1, 2005 03:48 PM | [Permalink](#)

TrackBack

Listed below are links to weblogs that reference [10 Things I've Learned as a Blogging Librarian](#):

» [TTW Favorites](#) from Tame The Web: Libraries and Technology Via Ken Smith: <http://www.mchron.net/site/edublog.php?id=P3344>
Greatest Hits Collection: Tim Porter went on holiday and left behind a list of what he considers to be his best pieces. This is a list of maybe four dozen posts, with a link and a... [\[Read More\]](#)

Tracked on [December 22, 2005 08:39 PM](#)

Comments

Amen! Your blog really is an inspiration to me. I started out blogging on Livejournal, more as a 'day to day' happenings of my life. I moved to my own Wordpress site to focus more on content. I discovered RSS and the LIS blogosphere, and since then more and more of my posts are Library and/or Tech related.

And its safe to say that if I hadn't started blogging I never would have gone to CiL and met so many wonderful people.

So yes, happy anniversary!

Posted by: [Chad](#) | [April 1, 2005 04:06 PM](#)

Like Chad above I started out blogging on personal interest items...moved on to the blend blog/website of LibraryPop (www.librarypop.org) and now we've just redesigned my library's website with CMS and a blog at the center (www.pontiacpubliclibrary.org).

One thing unmentioned above is how incredibly inexpensive blogging is for promoting a library...and, particularly if you are a small library and community, your community.

Our hosting fee monthly is less than \$10, we chose Mambo's open source CMS for the site at a cost of \$0...and creating blog posts takes about 10-15 minutes per post on average with graphics included!

Needless to say, I'm getting requests from directors of the other small libraries around me to help train them. We're moving forward quickly around here.

Posted by: [Bill Lamb](#) | [April 1, 2005 06:09 PM](#)

congratulations,I am a librarian of China,frankly saying,I like to read your blog everyday! Tt's a nice site to study IS or IT.

Posted by: [youyuan](#) | [April 2, 2005 01:40 AM](#)

Michael

Very well said. As a newbie in the blogger community but a veteran of many years of e-mail and lists, I find blogs to be very refreshing. They have some surface similarities to the old bulletin board systems but are much easier to use and much easier to find.

Posted by: [Bill Drew](#) | [April 4, 2005 10:33 AM](#)

Since when is blog stuff not copyrighted? Take a look at your inspiration's copyright notice, for example:

[www\[dot\]librarystuff\[dot\]net\[slash\]about\[dot\]html](#) . I think the point you may have meant to make is that librarians are, in general, remarkably generous with the permissions we grant under our copyrights, sometimes even to the point of waiving copyright entirely. Congrats on the 2yr anniversary!

Posted by: [Brian](#) | [April 4, 2005 04:23 PM](#)

Just wanted to wish you and TTW a big happy birthday! I really appreciate the topics you write about!

Posted by: [Grace Lee](#) | [April 5, 2005 10:31 AM](#)

Happy birthday TTW, and thanks for all of us, the folks outside the US enjoying reading your posts regularly - even if we can't attend CIL or other conferences, we feel part of the LISblogging family !

Posted by: [Marlene](#) | [April 9, 2005 08:44 AM](#)

Just after reading the part of your ethics article on fixing typos, I spotted a quote surrounded by question marks rather than quote marks. FYI! (I notice that you seem to have a Mac connection (like most intelligent people) and I (sadly, through no fault of my own) am viewing on a PC with XP, so it's possible there is a connection...

I am just starting to investigate blogs and yours was recommended, so I am curious to see how you implement yours! Thanks!

Posted by: Sherry Bailey | [May 18, 2005 03:50 PM](#)

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Preview

Post