

Web Logs

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WEB LOGS

A Web log, more commonly known as a blog, is a publication on the Internet. Blogs have been credited with allowing people to develop online communities with a group of friends, classmates and professors, or the wider world because of how easy they are to create and of how accessible they are to anyone on the Internet. They are easy to create because they do not require the blogger, the person creating the blog, to know hypertext markup language (HTML). In addition, content in a blog may be text, graphics, hyperlinks, photos, audio, and/or video. Many blogs look like personal journal entries because they are updated on a daily or weekly basis. They typically have the following features:

- **Title:** Main title, or headline, of the post
- **Body:** Main content of the post
- **Comments:** Comments added by readers
- **Permalink:** The URL of the full, individual article

- **Post Date:** Date and time the post was published
- **Blogroll:** Hyperlinks to other blogs that the blog author reads or is affiliated with

In addition to these typical blog features, the blog may also contain the following optional features:

- **Categories (or tags):** Subjects that the entry discusses
- **Trackback:** Links to other sites that refer to the entry

An example of a typical blog may be seen in Figure 1.

HISTORY OF BLOGS

Jorn Barger is often given credit for first using the term Web log in 1997 in his Web site title *Robot Wisdom*

Figure 1. A blog homepage



Leslie, Scott (2005). *EdTechPost: Technologies for learning, thinking, and collaborating*; Retrieved January 7, 2005, from <http://edtechpost.ca/wordpress/index.php>

(Paquet, 2003). Then in 1998, Jesse James Garrett, who had published a Web log and was editor of *Infosift*, began compiling a list of Web sites similar to his own. This list was then sent by Garrett to Cam-World's Cameron Barrett, who published it on his Web site in late 1998. This 1998 list include only 23 known Web logs. Then in early 1999, Peter Merholz is reported to have said that a Web site on which an author posted journal entries in chronological order with the most recent appearing at the top of the page should be called a "wee blog." This eventually become shortened to "blog" with the site's author being called a "blogger" (Merhol, & Peterme, 1999). These early Web logs were simply manually updated components of common Web sites. Rebecca Blood (2002) describes these early Web logs as link-driven Web sites that had "a mixture of commentary, and personal thoughts and essays." These early Web logs were created by people who already knew how to make a Web site. These early bloggers were people who had either taught themselves to code HTML for fun or had jobs creating commercial Web sites.

In July of 1999, Pyra Labs introduced *Blogger*. Blogger was the first developer-hosted blogging application that offered free creation and hosting of Web logs. Later that same year, UserLand Software announced its development of *Manila*, a server-based content management software. Late in 1999, software developer Dave Winer introduced *Edit This Page*, and Jeff A. Campbell launched *Velocinews*. All of these products allowed individuals to publish material to the Web using a simple browser-based interface where the user creates a Web log by choosing a template, filling in the forms, and then clicking a button to have the Web log published on the Internet. This meant that individuals wanting to publish on the Internet no longer had to have a rudimentary knowledge of a basic markup language (HTML), have a Web site account, and be able to use file transfer protocol (FTP) software to copy the created Web page from the user's local hard drive to the actual Web site account.

Between 2001 and 2004, an increasing number of people were becoming interested enough in blogging that how-to manuals began to appear, primarily focusing on the steps to creating a blog. In addition more people were reading blogs and forming blogging communities. Most of the blogs that were on the Internet at this time were of a political nature: Andrew Sullivan's *AndrewSullivan.com*, Ron Gunzburger's *Politics1.com*, Taegan Goddard's *Political Wire* and

Jerome Armstrong's *MyDD*. Also, several established schools of journalism began researching blogging and studying the differences between journalism and blogging. In 2004, *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* declared "blog" as the word of the year.

The *New York Times* estimated in August (2006) that there were now over a half a million Web logs, with the number growing.

HOW ARE BLOGS CREATED

A blog is created using a standard Web browser and a blogging application. The blogging application may be a user-hosted or developer-hosted system. User-hosted means that the software for creating the blog is installed on either a server administered by the user or on the users own computer. With a user-hosted system the blogger must be directly connected to the server housing the software in order to create a blog entry. User-hosted systems are more appropriate for institutional use, since access can be controlled. Examples of user-hosted blogging applications are *Wordpress*, *Greymatter*, and *Movable Type*. In developer-hosted blogging the software application for creating the blog is located on a server owned by someone else who administers the hardware required to run the blog. Many developer-hosted systems allow the blogger to create and edit a blog without having to be on the Internet. With a Web interface the blogger using a developer-hosted system may create a blog entry anywhere in the world. Developer-hosted systems are provided by some Web hosting companies (e.g., Tripod, Edublogs, and SchoolBlogs.com), Internet service providers (America Online), online publications (Salon.com) and internet portals (Yahoo! 360° or Google).

Whether user-hosted or developer-hosted, the blogging application presents the blogger with a simple template containing form fields into which the blogger enters text for the title, body, and category of the blog entry. For those situations in which the blog will also contain graphic, image, audio, and/or video files the blogger simply clicks a button. Each button opens a dialog box for accepting a specific kind of information. This system of buttons and dialog boxes allows the blog software to write HTML code. Finally, with a developer-hosted blogging application the blogger clicks a publish button to finish the process and upload the entry to the Web homepage for general viewing.

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