

Chapter XVI

Supporting Student Blogging in Higher Education

Lucinda Kerawalla

The Open University, UK

Shailey Minocha

The Open University, UK

Gill Kirkup

The Open University, UK

Gráinne Conole

The Open University, UK

ABSTRACT

With a variety of asynchronous communication and collaboration tools and environments such as Wikis, blogs, and forums, it can be increasingly difficult for educators to make appropriate choices about when and how to use these technologies. In this chapter, the authors report on the findings from a research programme on educational blogging which investigated the blogging activities of different groups of Higher Education students: undergraduate and Masters-level distance learners, and PhD students. The authors discuss empirical evidence of students' experiences, perceptions, and expectations of blogging. We provide an empirically-grounded framework which can guide course designers and educators in their decision-making about whether and how to include blogging in their course-contexts so as to create value and to generate a positive student experience. Also, this framework can help guide students who are either thinking about blogging for themselves, or who are undertaking course-directed blogging activities.

INTRODUCTION

Blogging started in the form of Web pages or Websites through which people informed one another about other Websites or Web pages through links and comments. Tim Berners-Lee in 1992 created the first ‘What’s new’ page; later Marc Andreessen set up a similar page with links to new Web pages that were coming up on the Internet. Justin Hall started a filter log in 1994 which was effectively pages with recommended links for others surfing on the internet. In December 1997, the term ‘Weblog’ for ‘logging the Web’ was coined by Jorn Barger. From these link-driven sites, a community arose, and in 1999 the Websites Blogger and Pitas offered a simpler way to creating a Weblog without having to know HTML. Soon Web-log or we-blog was shortened to ‘blog’ by the programmer Peter Merholz and blogs evolved into personal journals or diaries. For a history of blogging from its origins and until 2000, please see Blood (2006).

With free blog-creation services, it was now possible for anyone to publish both events and opinions without the mediation (or cost) of professional media. Blogging moved into wider public consciousness when independent eyewitness reports in the form of a Web diary on the invasion of Iraq by the ‘Baghdad Blogger’ (Salam, 2003) were read and republished in print newspapers (e.g. the Guardian in the UK). Blogging activity has expanded and journalists now engage in blogging alongside the more traditional forms of journalism. It is now possible to set up a commercial blogging-organisation. For example ‘BlogHer’ (retrieved on 19th March 2008 from <http://www.blogher.org/about-blogher-0>) exists as a network for US homemakers, which is funded by venture capital and it accepts advertising, thereby providing employment for its originators.

Blogging has become another genre of text, and bloggers range from the amateur diary keeper, with no audience except for family, to commercial business blogs (Bruns and Jacobs, 2006, Nardi *et*

al. 2004). In 2006, a US telephone survey reported that 8% of US adult internet users kept a blog and nearly 40% reported reading one. More than half saw the activity as a form of self-expression and were not concerned about whether others read their blog, while about one third felt that they were engaged in some form of ‘journalism’ and wrote for others to read (Lenhart and Fox, 2006). Businesses are seeing the huge potential of the conversational nature of blogging and have begun to adapt it for marketing, advertising, and even as a recruiting tool (Scobel & Israel, 2006). It is within this context that educational use of blogging is developing, and it’s not clear how educational blogging is being perceived by students who would have been exposed to different genres of blogging. It is against this backdrop that we have carried out a research programme in educational blogging which we report in this chapter.

Previous researchers have attempted to define different types of blogs, such as a ‘personal journal’ or a ‘filter blog’ (Herring *et al.*, 2004) both of which may, at first glance, support learning. However, these descriptions seem to focus on the end product (i.e., the blog), rather than on the activity of blogging. In this way, the virtues of blogging are reduced to what ends up on the blog, to the detriment of considering the activities involved in creating and posting material to the blog. This approach also fails to recognise whether, how, and why blogging in a public online space is of benefit to the blogger.

Boyd (2006) defines blogging as “a diverse set of practices that result in the production of diverse content on top of what we call blogs” (p1), which suggests that ‘blogs’ and ‘blogging’ can mean different things to different people. This suggests that blogging software can be used for an infinite number of activities, and raises the question of how educators a) can exploit the potential of blogging and the available software for blogging; and b) encourage their students to participate in blogging.

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/supporting-student-blogging-higher-education/21375

Related Content

Fast Single Image Haze Removal Scheme Using Self-Adjusting: Haziness Factor Evaluation

Sangita Roy and Sheli Sinha Chaudhuri (2019). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality* (pp. 42-57).

www.irma-international.org/article/fast-single-image-haze-removal-scheme-using-self-adjusting/228945

Mapping Virtual Learning in Distance Education: Review and Research Agenda

Narendra Kumar (2025). *Creating Immersive Learning Experiences Through Virtual Reality (VR)* (pp. 239-262).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/mapping-virtual-learning-in-distance-education/356910

Advanced Visual SLAM and Image Segmentation Techniques for Augmented Reality

Yirui Jiang, Trung Hieu Tran and Leon Williams (2022). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality* (pp. 1-28).

www.irma-international.org/article/advanced-visual-slam-and-image-segmentation-techniques-for-augmented-reality/307063

Advanced Visual SLAM and Image Segmentation Techniques for Augmented Reality

Yirui Jiang, Trung Hieu Tran and Leon Williams (2022). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality* (pp. 1-28).

www.irma-international.org/article/advanced-visual-slam-and-image-segmentation-techniques-for-augmented-reality/307063

Problem Solving in Teams in Virtual Environments Using Creative Thinking

Aditya Jayadas (2019). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality* (pp. 41-53).

www.irma-international.org/article/problem-solving-in-teams-in-virtual-environments-using-creative-thinking/239897