OCSLD GUIDE TO BLOGGING

What is a blog?

Blogs (from Weblogs) are chronological, updateable web published entries often around a specific topic or issue, in 'journal' format with options to link to pictures, other media and other blogs, and usually offering readers the chance to leave comments. The archived entries form an ongoing record including any posted comments on the entries. Ease of posting and commenting as well as the decentralised nature of their content and distribution, compared with traditional forms of publishing and knowledge distribution, have contributed to blogging's growth as a form of social media.

Blogs differ from some other useful communication media such as online message boards and email lists in that a blog is driven by an individual or a small subgroup while in message boards and email lists all members typically have equal control of value and content.

How are they used?

In practice blogs are used for a wide variety of purposes including but not restricted to:

- Knowledge sharing and knowledge management
- Interactive journalism – e.g. Crisis reporting as in the events in Burma in September 2007.
- Communication and collaboration
- Connecting resources
- Self-expression
- Learning
- Customer service
- Marketing
- Campaigning/social reform
- Community building.
- Storytelling
- Online business presence

Learning activities with blogs

Contributing to the potential for blogging for educational or learning purposes are the following:

- The ease of blog publication has helped to change the web to a forum where anyone can contribute, without any special equipment or skills
- Provision of a channel for reflective 'voice' and opinion with the opportunity to react and interact with other commenting opinions

Blogging activities that have been implemented by course facilitators and students in learning at Brookes and in other school and higher education contexts include the following:

- Connect and communicate with other students/peers/experts, including across national boundaries
- Present completed or ongoing work, digital portfolios
- Record reflective learning journals
- Present or link to class information, news and events
- Post assignments, materials and resources
- Use blog posts and comments to facilitate interactive discussions
- Record notes
- Post questions and answers
- Record events
- Interact and collaborate for team/group work
- Create collaborative publications
- Post feedback and comments (including anonymously)
- Integrate with a variety of media e.g. graphics, video clips (vodcasts), podcasts or slidecasts.

Privacy issues

Privacy and disclosure issues related to public online social spaces require blog owners and posters to consider how to decide and manage appropriate levels of disclosure and privacy. In learning and teaching contexts students need to be advised accordingly. Also consider issues related to work that is publicly displayed e.g. for assessment.

Software and hosting for blogs

There are a range of free and pay blogging services including Blogger (www.blogger.com, now part of Google), Edublogs (edublogs.org) and Wordpress (www.wordpress.com), some of which are quite complicated to set up.
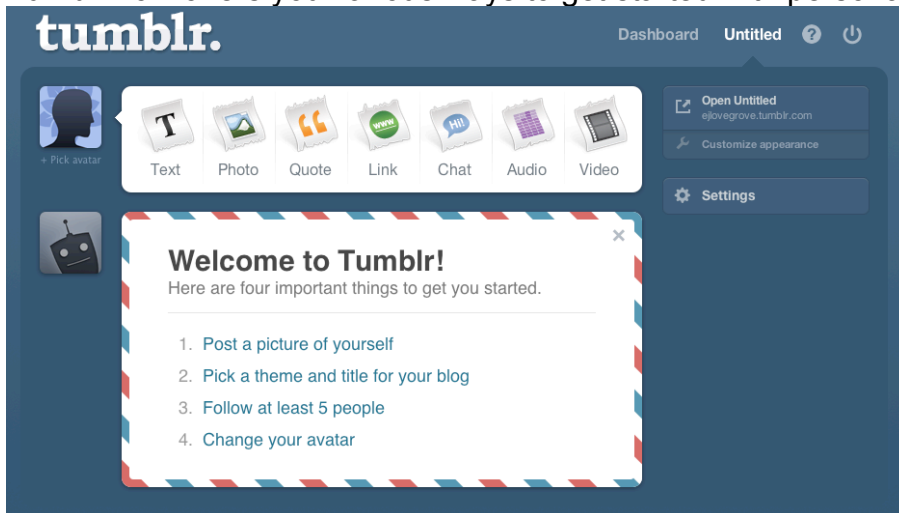
There are also newer arrivals such as Tumblr (www.tumblr.com) and Posterous (posterous.com), which have very quick signup processes, and which allow you to email in any content you like – text, links, images, video, etc – and have it automatically post to your blog.

Create your own blog at Tumblr

1. Go to www.tumblr.com

2. Type in your email address, the password you wish to use, and choose a URL for your blog, then click 'start posting'

3. Type in the displayed distorted words to complete the 'captcha' and confirm you're not a bot (or click the 'refresh' button if the words aren't clear enough)

4. Tumblr now offers you various ways to get started with personalising your new blog:

5. Click on 'customise appearance' to choose blog themes, and set a title for your blog, or go to 'settings' to change your blog's settings, and to find the address to use for posting by email. Make a note of this address: anything you email to it will automatically be posted to your blog.

6. You can also just click the 'text' button at the top left to post from the web interface:

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