

Are You "Blogging" Yet?

You may have noticed the word "blog" popping up more and more lately. What is a blog? What can it be used for? And more importantly, are you missing out on something that "everybody" else already knows about?

The word "blog", as with most things on the internet, is a shortened version of another term: "web log". Blogs essentially began as a type of online journal, a diary of sorts. And of course, as things are wont to do on the net, from there it has morphed into something that nearly everyone has and something that can't really be easily categorized.

As of July 1, 2007, Technorati, a blog search engine, was tracking over 90 million blogs. What's in those 90 million blogs? You can find discussions on everything from cooking to politics, from book clubs to celebrity news. And just about anything else you can conceive of. Auto dealers have blogs. Dieters have blogs.

Personally, I have three blogs. Well, four actually, but one of them isn't updated any longer. I have a blog for the business I have outside the library because my HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language; the language of the internet) skills are not very good and I find a blog easier to update.

I have a blog for my novel writing so that my critique partners, friends, and family can keep up to date on my progress. And I host one for a community that developed elsewhere as a fan site for a couple of published authors. Getting started is easy, once you get over the trauma of deciding what you are going to write about. There are several companies that offer free hosting: Blogger, WordPress, and LiveJournal are but three of the options which are accessible by our patrons here at the library.

Once you've jumped into the fray, there is an entire new world to discover.

A few helpful hints:

*Limit your daily reading to a reasonable period or you will find yourself swallowed up in the time vacuum of the internet. If you find a site you want to return to, bookmark it, or add it to the list of links displayed on your own blog.

*If you comment on other blogs, it will attract people to your own. The more interesting and well-written your comment, the more likely someone will follow you back to your own blog.

*Be sure to update your blog on a regular basis in order to keep your readers interested.

*Not only should you avoid blogging on company time, you should leave your company out of the picture all together. While it may seem cathartic to whine about your boss and the horrible day you just had, people have been fired for blogging about work even when they do so on personal time. Keep those comments for the diary that you are NOT publishing for the world to see.

For help getting started, take a look at a couple of these titles here at the library:

Publishing a Blog with Blogger by Elizabeth Castro

Blogwild!: a Guide for Small Business Blogging by Andy Wibbels

Create Your Own Photo Blog by Catherine Jamieson

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