A Journey From Weblog to Library Blog

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Abstract

During the past two decades, internet has evolved with many new techniques and tools such as E-mail list, Bulletin board, Listserves, Usenet, IRC, Wikis and Blog. These have been becoming an important part of virtual community and contribute to human life in various aspects like social, educational, political and business. In this web-world, probably weblog (so called blog), has become the newest communication medium that publish "what's new" page online. In other sense, it is a supplement web page as well as a referring tool to promote its regular web-site, by refreshing and updating news. Blog may indeed be a greater milestone in the history of publishing. In this article, author have stressed fundamentally on blogs and their global proliferation and implementation for libraries. Also the solid motive behind the title entitled "A journey from weblog to library blog" is to indicate the role of weblog and how it would helpful to library in all means for creating a social network among e-library environment.

Keywords: Blog, Library blog, RSS, Aggregator, Headline Syndication, Content Development

1.   Introduction

Over the year we have witnessed the introduction of many new technologies for communicating and writing in digital space; starting from "hypertext" to chat room in association with News Groups, Wiki's and above all peer-to-peer File Sharing Networks. These new technologies poised some new challenges among technocrats in this electronic age to organize, collect and disseminate the required information according to the suitability of information society. Hence to face the crucial challenges and cope up with the new proliferation of knowledge, in recent day's technocrats are being researched on these emerged phenomenon to workout a solution of it. In this context weblog is considered as an effective solution and renewed challenge for information publishing web-world, which not only seeking to address the social and discursive implication, but also for creating a medium of information seeking habits among upcoming net-generation.

"Today "Weblog/ Blog" are available in various flavors, range from the simple "what's new" type of listing to sophisticated web sites with dozen of bells and whistles- site search capabilities; topical categories, daily, weekly and monthly archives; update content; built-in mailing list management function and RSS headline syndication" [1]. So now blog phenomenon has caught the online world by surprise for its interesting and insightful function. Many librarians started off blog excitedly. But it is the time to realize, before publishing or creating a library blog. Here thus the aim and purpose of this article is to identify the objective of blog and to investigate the way, what libraries are being

maintained, reached to its audience globally and combined the accessibility of web with an ease-use.

2. Blog a decade Ago

Before going to introspect about weblog and its usability, we must look at, what was before the blog; what opportunities the blog has been brought for the information society. Surprisingly, "before blog era, we were all slaves of our webmaster, unless you were yourself one, public, companies, organizations, who wanted to have an online presence, called "website/homepage", it needed sooner or later someone technically skilled to take care of it" [2]. This factor was enough for web engineer to make research on this issue. While at a first glance, weblog appeared as mere online-dairy that centrally mean of "decentralized publishing". Meaning its aim was to provide news, information and links to internet resources for net users. At present it has been created and available in various flavors, purposed for the betterment of information communities.

A brief sketch of weblog can be represented as depicted in table shown below

1992	Internet Pioneer Tim-berners-Lee, first mentioned the Blog concept, in his book "what is new page online".
1994	First Log of web, was introduced by Justin Hall in his Filter Log
1995	American Librarian Jenny Levine began the 1st library blog. It was called librarians' site Du-Jours
1997	The term Weblog, was first coined by Jorn Barger
1999	Websites blogger and pital, began to offer a similar way to create a weblog with an intention to allowed any person to easily sign up, create a blog, and write numerous postings.
2004-2005	Year of blog and social networks
2006	Big blogbased search engine Technorati was tracked more than 57million blogs in 2006. It's a record for web world

Table.1. Brief history of weblog.

3. Weblog Concept

3.1. Blog: What?

The term "Blog" refers to a website that is called "log of the web"[3], which indicates a blending of words Web and Log. "Log" stands for describing the systematic/sequential recording of data processing event, often chronologically and "Web" points to material available on the World Wide Web. So based on this principle blog has evolved for publishing and posting data in web.

Various authors have defined blog differently; however the basic theme is remain same. In the word of a few, like Peter Sepp, Chris, Ivan and Stephen Downes;

"Blog is an online publishing press or an information transmission hub, news reporting networks, a catalogue, a clearing house for idea, personal diary or a website 'with new data' and updated frequently with links, commentary and, contains brief entries arranged in reverse chronological order".

"It's thus a highly flexible non-technical publishing instrument, has morphed into the powerhouses of opinion and information of web world"[4].

3.2.   What is Library Blog?

In library context, blog define as a referring content management (or distribution) tool/system (CMS) that helps to broadcast useful information to end-user, in order to promote awareness of library programs and services in electronic environment. In other word, it as a form of journalistic expression, communication agent or new publishing media to library markets, which have connected the world online.

3.3.   A List of Library blogs dealing with specific subject area:

General Library Issues:	Lists of Library Blogs:
• Free Range Librarian (http://freerangelibrarian.com): K.G. Schneider • Information Wants to Be Free (http://meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/index.php): Meredith Farkas • Librarian.net (http://www.librarian.net/): Jessamyn West • Library Stuff (http://www.librarystuff.net/): Steven M. Cohen • LIS News (http://lisnews.org/) • The Shifted Librarian (www.theshiftedlibrarian.com): Jenny Levine	• Library Weblogs (http://www.libdex.com/weblogs.html): International List of Library Blogs, Peter Scott • Blogging Libraries Wiki http://www.blogwithoutalibrary.net/links/index.php?Wiki • Bloglines (http://www.bloglines.com/public/amanda)
	Library Legal Issues:
	• beSpacific (www.bespacific.com) • LibraryLaw (http://blog.librarylaw.com/librarylaw)
Library Technology Issues:	**Library Association Blogs:**
• ALA TechSource Blog (www.techsource.ala.org): ALA TechSource • LibrarianInBlack (http://librarianinblack.typepad.com): Sarah Houghton • TechnoBiblio (www.technobiblio.com): Stephanie Wright	• ACRLog (http://acrlblog.org/): Association of College & Research Libraries Blog • LITA Blog (http://litablog.org): Library and Information Technology Association • PLA Blog (www.plablog.org): Public Library Association
Library Marketing Issues:	**Blogs for Internal Library Communication:**
• Library Marketing – Thinking Outside the Book (http://librarymarketing.blogspot.com/): Jill Stover • LibTalk Blog (http://libtalk.blogspot.com/): Candi Clevenger	• BarnardRefDesk (http://barnardrefdesk.blogspot.com/): Barnard College Library • Memphis Public Library and Information Center – Technical Trainer (http://mplictechtrain.blogspot.com/) • L-net Staff Information Blog (http://www.oregonlibraries.net/staff/) – Oregon Libraries Network

Table-2

4. Why Library Blog?

There are several reasons for introducing this new publishing technology to library, some of the major benefit that a library can get from blog, listed below;

- Blog technology enables us to post news online more quickly without assistance of technical staff and knowledge;
- To engage customers and push fresh content to user;
- To provide links to recommend internet resources;
- To keep up-to-date news about library services & resources, and building their improvements;
- To share information about new materials or services;
- To show the list of new arrival of books or journals, and information about current news, book review, discussion and research tips;
- Intentions to automate the Web site news;
- An opportunity to build a virtual community;
- To encourage feedback from patrons;
- To know the accuracy of patron usage in library;
- To enables the rapid production and consumption of web-based publications;
- Facility for archiving web-based document automatically;
- Marketing the library services; and
- To supports, extends, or derives added value from human social behavior -like (message-boards, musical taste-sharing, photo-sharing, instant messaging, mailing lists and social networking).

5. Strategy to frame a Library Blog

Before starting to create a library blog with the help of any one of these blogger software (such as blogline, blogspot, blogwithout-library.net, library weblogs, lisfeed, typepad, movable type, wordpress, livejournal etc.,) available in market free or pay to use, necessary question need to be solved. So that it would be helpful not only for your library's automated news endeavors, but also for user to get best services out of it with easy and in effective way. Some of the important questions are discussed below, to trace it into context.

- **First job is to carefully consider your strategy:** To think of yourself, what's the purpose, whom to reach and what are the key messages, you would likely to add.

- **Next step you should decide the content and scope of your blog:** To make your blog informative, you should take care of following few points, like promoting, drafting and marketing of your resources (such as personnel, expertise, time and technology) and services. Also you should carefully watch on the implementation of your blog technically, see how it would fit within the library's ongoing and future web initiatives.

♦ **Last but not the least one is identifying project constraints and toolkit requirements:** Relating to hardware and software requirement, designing layout and type of security need.

6. How to create & design Library Blog

In this information driven age, weblog has not only brought an alternative and superior way to communicating with net users, but also worked as a social network to web media, which makes the information evaluation, selection, dissemination and usage much easier. So librarian should focus on proper plan & procedure and designing issue, before drafting their libraries blogs for use. Unlike library website, certain care should be taken, such as policies and procedures, promotion & work and maintenance, for cater users' need virtually.

6.1. Policies and Procedures

To make effective use of the web-potential, a number of issues need to be addressed properly, such as layout planning, content development, web hosting, RSS headline syndication and assign aggregators.

6.1.1. Layout planning and presentation: It is very easy to customize the designing process in library blog, but it needs a clear vision towards its designing elements, such as name, logo, site wide navigation, colors and fonts etc., also add such contents, which match to your library (such as Announcement; Ask us (part of e-reference system); Events (Coming, Current, Past); Library publication; Old and new acquisition; Pod-casts; Suggestion box ,Search box and so on.).
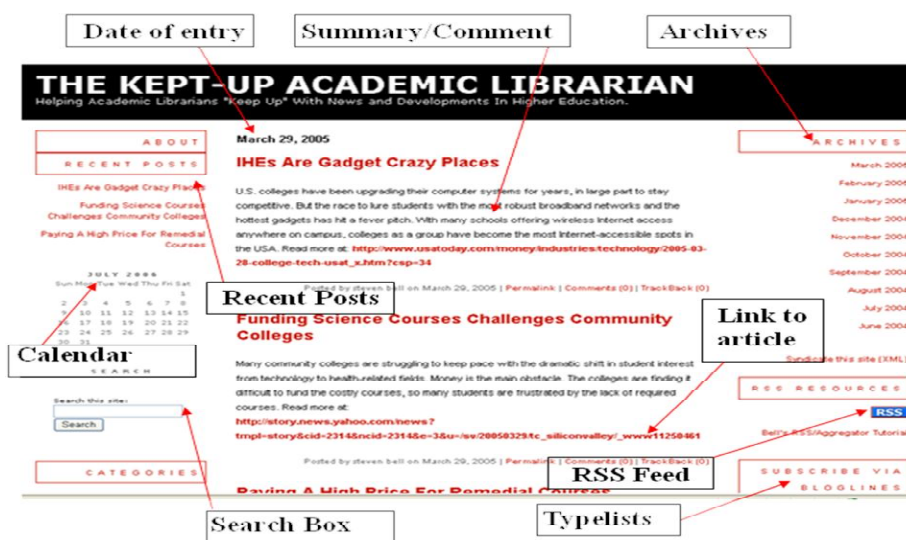

Fig.1. Library Blog Homepage & Its Design Layout

6.1.2. Content development: For library blog, the tool (or content) to be considered as an effective and simple-to-use management system, so called "blog-entry", which is capable to provide authoring and editing facilities and able to automatically archive, categorize, index, title and name file. So it is most important to check out following issues [1]:

♦ **Title:** Checkout whether each blog entries having topic name or not? Also it should be posted with author's name and give a link to other post of author's creation.

♦ **Post:** Can article publish in blog become easier to read, sufficiently highlighted the major content (data) with bold face and show the hyperlink for further references or not?

♦ **Categories:** Do you need categories, which help you to create subject heading, set metadata for easy harvesting, accessing data and browsing by broad topic?

♦ **Time and/or permalink**: When the file/article is posted, give a full description of that and often give a link to a permanent page just for that post? This allows other bloggers to link to a post.

♦ **Comments**: Do your library required any software feature that allows readers to leave their own comments and reactions to the author's post?

♦ **Track Back**: whether track-back facility available or not? It helps you for establishing a way one-blog post to link to the post of another blog. In other words, one blogger can write about the content of another person's weblog, and the two posts are linked in web.

♦ **Archives:** Can the blog automatically create daily, monthly or yearly archives?

♦ **Search:** Will site visitors want to search the archives of old post?

♦ **Community tools:** Do you wish to post all what is new and current to User?

♦ **Subscription lists:** Will your readers want to come to your site each day to read your posts, or would they prefer to receive a daily digest delivered to their mailboxes?

♦ **Headline Syndication:** Will you want other Web sites to be able to show your headlines with the help of RSS-feed? RSS files are a truly wonderful way to syndicate your content and spread the word about the content at your site.

♦ **Calendar:** Give the link and used calendar for date wise searching provision for each posting in a month. N.B:-This link provides added advantage to above toolkit [http://www.lights.com/weblogs/tools.html.]

Figure:2 Anatomy of A Blog-Entry

6.1.3. Web Blog Hosting

a) Selection of web host tools: Before addressing bloging software, it should be essential to identify the best software or tools for use. Some of the blog tools are freely available on the web and you can purchase some blog for your web hosting.

Here a brief list of such blog specify categorically available free or pay-to-use.

Use	Name of software/Tools	URL address of blog software	Owned By	Major feature	Desktop/server based
Free	Blogger	www.blogger.com	Google	**H**elp you publish to the web instantly and give a way to automate the blog publishing process without writing any code or worrying about installing any sort of server software or script.	Desktop based
	Blogline	www.blogline.com	Ask- Jeeves	**A** web based news aggregator contain many online information sources & easy to syndicate RSS, without software download.	-do-
	Livejournal	www.livejournal.com	Six -Aprt	**A** community based software having customizable feature with access to www publish.	-do-
	Xanga	http://xanga.com	-do-	**I**t offer more publishing tools and page design option.	-do-
	Typepad	http://typepad.com			Server based
	Rediff	www.rediffiland.com	Rediff		Desktop based
					-do-
	Yahoo360	www.360.yahoo.com	Yahoo		-do-
	Pitas	http://pitas.com	Pitas	**U**nlike most hosts it use either FTP or web-based editing, gives you the option, offers "yourname.pitas.com" sub-domain.	-do-
	Wordpress	http://wordpress.org/		**I**t's open source software, having a great interface and useful features like 'private' posting (password-protected), file uploads, and many more. So these days widely used by various libraries.	Sever based
Pay–to-Use	Movable Type	http://www.livejournal.com		**I**t is most powerful one, with all facilities, like: to manipulate web designs, formats, and functions. But need to technical savvy to operate.	Server based
	PMachine	http://www.pmachine.com			-do-
	Plone	http://plone.org			-do-
	Komplete	http://www.interakt.ro/products/komplete/index.php			-do-
	Geeklog	http://www.geeklog.net/			-do- -do-

Table-3. List of weblog software

N.B: See Blogroots for a comprehensive list of weblog tools and programs.

b) **Web hosting:** Web hosting is very easy task for doing a blog. You can make it through install blogging software available in market, select one of those and run it on your library's web server or desktop computers (windows, UNIX/Linux, Macintosh) and use a supported

programming language like PHP, MySQL, Perl, Java, Cold Fusion etc.

6.1.4. RSS-feed Syndication

RSS (Real Simple Syndication/RDF Site Summary) is becoming one of the influential tools with growing number of task, such as headline syndication/news posting, eTocs, updating and locating content for library site. It allows a blog posting to be syndicated and fed to an aggregator. Generally RSS is a simple XML syntax, describing feed of recent addition to a website and/or weblog. The major applications of RSS to library through BLOG are listed below.

Fig.3 Popular rss-feeds

♦ **Announcement:** RSS can be useful for more formal announcement in library, by showing the details of new arrivals, changes in library's activities, update news and so on.

♦ **Books:** RSS is cropping up in numerous roles relating to books and monographs, such as- review to new book for acquisition, bibliographic details of new arrival, link to Amazon.com that syndicate content and locate the best seller in various categories of books and other product.

♦ **Journals:** In recent year so many publisher and intermediaries are providing RSS feeds containing table of content, abstract and link to full text of newly published journal, cause for easy syndication and automatic updating feature. It could also be used to update e-journal's holding with in a local OPAC or ILS.

♦ **Portals:** Library can provide useful service by collating feeds and make them available to end-user. This can be done in two ways, firstly providing list of RSS feeds to subscribe with in library blog and secondly by incorporating information from other site directly through RSS feeds into your blog.

♦ **Search Engine:** Because of its flexibility, there are various RSS based search engine come into picture, like Feedster, DayPop, Technorati, LisZen and PubSub. They help to index RSS files in your blog, solely content are taken from various blogs/sites.

6.1.5. Aggregator

A blog is pretty worthless if no one subscribes to it. That is where news aggregators come in follow, which helps to subscribe feeds and capture news items automatically from multiple sources on web. In real sense the prime roles of an aggregator is read RSS feeds and enable users to organize and access information, by giving link to related web pages. There are a dozen of aggregators available in market these days. They can be categorized as following main groups.

♦ **Web-based Aggregators:** Needs a user name/password but can be read on any PC. E.g. Blogline, blogger, Amphetadesk, Newsgator and Google Reader.

♦ **Desk-top Reader:** Software installed on PC and feeds download when connected to the internet. E.g. Feed Reader, Radio Userland and Crawler.

♦ **Web Browser:** Feeds can be read in a web browser. E.g. Explore and Firefox.

♦ **Personalized start pages:** E.g. www.pageflakes.com & www.netvibes.com

Fig.4. Add RSS feed using Crawler Reader.

6.2. Promotion and Working

There is various ways by which libraries are now marketing their online service, one of the easiest one through blog. The most obvious application of library blog is promoting library services, resources and program, such as: latest news posting, showing the news event & program, encourage feedback from user, highlighted new services and many more.

6.3. Maintenance

Remember the term "Home Page" to represent website and/or library blog. It refers two meaning, the first is "the front page that an internet browser first visits when opens and the second one is not just a building in web, but a place, you fix up and decorate many things to reflect your personalities and organizational initiatives [11]. Usually we have put so much effort, for getting into a new home (or blog), thinking about the architecture, design, layout, colors and pictures on the walls, but at the

same instance, we should carefully watch about the day-to-day maintenance after the thing is built. "A library blog is no exception to this, there is code to check, crack in walls to repair, traffic to monitor and a lot of technical data to read to keep abreast of changes in technology which impacts on your blog"[11] . So it needs careful attention to housekeeping and maintenance. Here a few tips have given, that put all into context.

- ◆ **Calender:** Make a schedule and Calendar to help in easy searching and keep up with your maintenance responsibility.E.g. http://www.rsscalendar.com/rss (beta)

- ◆ **Trackback:** Checkout the dead link and spam link each day through your permalink and trackback link, whether it works or showing "404-server error". Periodically review your trackback (go to edit screen and click on trackback buttons) and delete unnecessary link. There are several free sites that will help you find dead link and spam link, such as: Alexa.com's site report for amazon.com associates crawl your site and returns 50 dead links at a time. Others are site owner's link checker and Net mechanic link check.

- ◆ **Active Log:** It show recent activities such as:-author login, new entries, searches etc. if you have any server space constraints, it's a good idea to clear it out every once in a while. The Activity Log is accessible from your main blog edit screen, on the right side, under "Shortcuts". Click on the Activity Log link, and then click on the "Reset Activity Log" to clear the activity log information from your database.

- ◆ **Validate your HTML and CSS:** Whenever you make significant changes to your templates you should consider checking your main site pages through the W3C Markup Validator. The validator will help you find missing closing tags in your markup. You can also run your style sheet file through the W3C CSS Validator[12].

- ◆ **Unused templates and plugin:** check unused templates and delete them, if you need those in future, then go to Sixapart site and add to your blog.

- ◆ **RSS feed:** Subscribe latest feed for updating news for your blog.

- ◆ **Back up:** Occasionally things go wrong and you lose contents of your blog. So each time you need to back up your blog, what ever changed you have made. If you are using My-SQL database backing up is easy with simple dump command. For more help see tutorial [12] Backing Up Your Blog.

7. Ethics in Library Blogging

'Ethics' a philosophical term reflect the values of a society, by governing morality and acceptable conduct. It is thus the key concern for webmaster to focus on various issues before anything created and posted in WWW. For considering weblog "as an information communication agent", we must

see whether the existing laws of web has properly solved or not, what would be the real ethics behind blog that make it more popular in this era of net world. Let's check out the negative and positive impact of it.

Negative Factors	Positive Factors
➤ Half backed "Facts"; ➤ Copy right violation; ➤ Information Overload; ➤ Cross posting; ➤ Reliability of contents and ➤ No rules.	➤ Develop education and training; ➤ Inform user with latest news, events and programs; ➤ Freedom of exchange thought; ➤ Publish new documents and update contents; ➤ Easily find links to valuable web resources; ➤ Archive for further use; ➤ Marketing product and services; ➤ Be a owner of your site; ➤ Quick service provider cover wide geographical area; ➤ Messaging, photo sharing & social networking and many more.

Hence, it is necessary for a Library Blog to overview on these above positive/negative factors before creating it. Therefore when we consider blog for library, we must have to remind the five laws of library science, postulated by Dr.S.R.Ranganathan.

- ◆ **First Law: Books are for use.**

  Implication for library Blog: Blogs are not designed to admire from a distance [13]. We want people to interact with our blogs, click around, and seek information on desire.

- ◆ **Second Law: Every book its reader.**
  Third Law: Every reader its book.

  Implication for library Blog: Each pieces of content its user" and "each user his/her content" [13]. Do add contents keeping users need in mind, and make sure user must get valuable resources with in their finger-tips. Also make certain that "our content is something our users-need" and it must be specific, organized and properly arranged.

- ◆ **Fourth Law: Save the time of the user.**

  Implication for library Blog: This law says: Our blog-site should be interactive one. Meaning, the data content fed with in blog, must be structured, sufficiently highlighted and can be retrieved with easy and quick succession. It is also imperative that we should understand our user's goal, and have to try for achieving this through our blog-site.

- ◆ **Fifth Law: The library is a growing organism.**

  Implication for library Blog: "Change is the law of nature", it's applicable for all categories (both for our sites and our users). It does bring new concept that not only help to educate

users, also increase the usability and popularity of our sites. So we must need to keep our skill levels moving forward and constantly do edit and evaluate our site time to time.

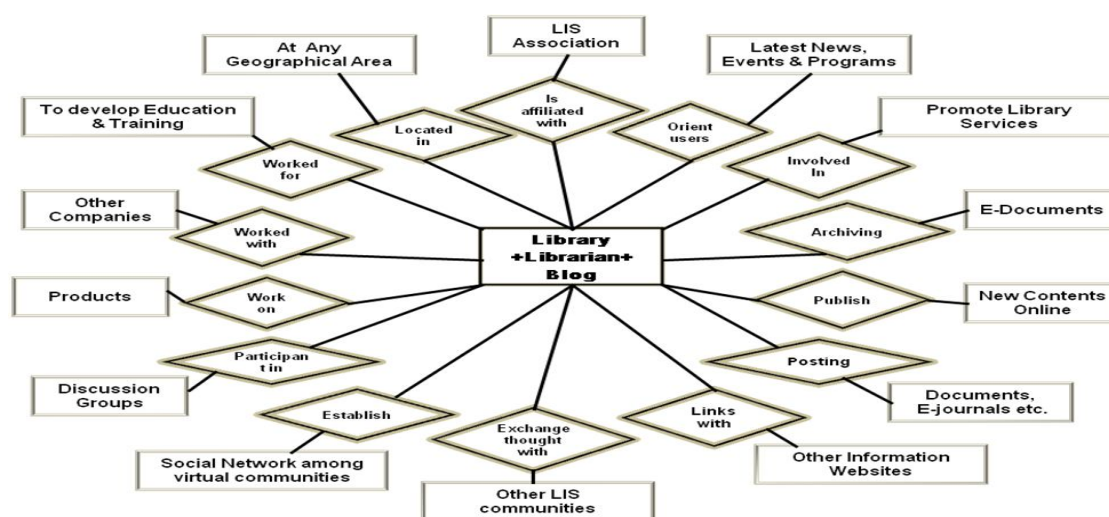## 8.   Librarian Roles

Fig.5. Role of librarian

9.   Conclusion

Since from the inception Library has been considered the powerhouse of knowledge, always aim to keep abreast with latest and new technology, which leads to foster information seeking habits among patrons. Blog the new publishing technology, indeed a value added service for libraries that not only provides latest information and entertainment, but also encourages curiosity and knowledge universally with quick succession. Thus before creating a Library Blog, we must overlook on these above related issues and objectives discussed with in this article and make a strategy for better reaching to end-users. So that it'd become the best fit into mainstream media in long run.

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