Blog and Wiki : DRDO Perspective

Bijayananda Pradhan   Parveen Gupta

Abstract

Blog and Wiki which are not only useful for web communities at large but also very helpful for the librarians/information scientists in sharing and disseminating information in the web 2.0 environment. A wiki is a website that allows and encourages users to share information by freely writing new content, adding to existing content, and editing or commenting on content. Similarly a blog is a website in which items are posted on a regular basis and displayed in reverse chronological order. The paper gives a detailed account of how the DRDO communities is getting benefitted through their DRDO intranet by DRDO Wiki and DRDO Blog which are being hosted and administered by DESIDOC.

Keywords: Blog, Wiki, Web 2.0, DRDO, DESIDOC

1. Introduction

DESIDOC, established in 1958, aims to be a Centre of Excellence in collection, processing, and disseminating S&T information on cutting-edge technologies for defence research and development. DESIDOC is a central information centre for providing scientific information, digitisation services, library services, reprography services, translation services and printing services to the DRDO scientific community. It also provides consultancy and referral services to Technical Information Resource Centres (TIRCs)/libraries of DRDO and other defence institutions and publishes scientific and technical journals and monographs of the DRDO.

With a view to facilitate easy access to all DESIDOC's services on DRDO intranet, DESIDOC created a single window concept. To avail these services, the users have to log on to the home page of DESIDOC on DRDO intranet and click on the button DESIDOC Services. This will take the user to the single window services offered by DESIDOC, the user will see 28 buttons. The Fig: 1 shows the services accessed at the single window.

2. Dynamics of Blog and Wiki and their relevance to DRDO

The terms like blog, wiki, really simple syndication (RSS), E-mail forums, online office, personal web learning, shared videos, video online and podcasting are getting attention now a days. These web 2.0 technologies, particularly blog and wiki,
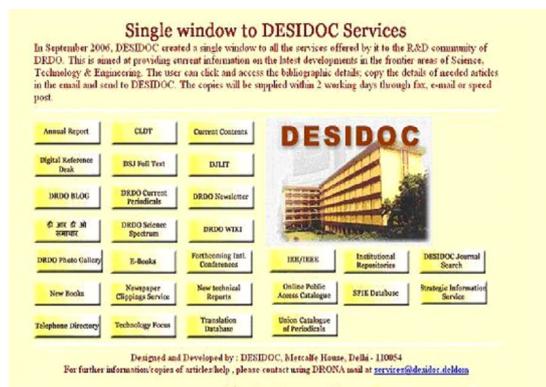

Figure 1 Single window to DESIDOC Services

provide the ability to publish or broadcast free on a network that has facilitated a higher level of interaction in sharing users experiences. The scientists which are having a rich experiences of a particular technology can publish their tacit knowledge through this next generation web environment technologies like blog and wiki to facilitate their followers who are working in the same areas. This is the area where DESIDOC is eyeing about to provide the platform for the DRDO communities for sharing their valuable knowledge and experiences through DRDO blog and DRDO wiki being hosted by DESIDOC, which is otherwise almost impossible to be documented and utilised. In the process, DESIDOC is helping in managing a great pool of knowledge which is resided in the brains of scientists and engineers who are engaged in R&D activities related to defence science and technology.

3.   What is a Blog?

A blog or Weblog is a website, usually personal, professional or institutional with regular entries of comments, descriptions of events or other material in reverse chronological order from the most recent 'post' or entry at the top of the main page to the oldest entries towards the bottom[1]. A typical blog combines text, graphics, and video, and has links to other blogs/web pages. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs.

Most blogs are primarily textual and focussed on art (artlog), photographs (photoblog), sketches (sketchblog), videos (vlog), music (MP3 blog), audio (podcasting), which are part of a wider network of social media. Micro-blogging is another type of blogging, one which consists of blogs with very short posts. As of December 2007, blog search

engine Technorati was tracking more than 112 million blogs.[1] With the advent of video blogging, the word blog has taken on an even looser meaning — that of any bit of media wherein the subject expresses his opinion or simply talks about something.

Web blogs are used by teachers also to communicate with their students for creative writing sessions. This is a kind of communication method, where anybody can post their writings and ideas when they feel they are most creative and also the read the writings of others which is convenient and concerned to them. Hence the blog can become a creative and important communication hub in today's environment.

3.1 Why a blog?

Blogs are now widely regarded as a mainstream technology. The number of personal and organisational blogs has increased dramatically in recent years. The primary reasons for the popularity of blogs can be listed as follows[3]:

♦ Cheap or free to produce;
♦ Do not require proprietary software to be installed;
♦ Do not require specialist computer skills;
♦ Content can be updated and disseminated easily;
♦ Readers can get instant notification of new posts using RSS; and
♦ Comments can be posted by anyone, producing a dialogue between readers and writers.

3.2 Types of Blogs

There are many different types of blogs, differing not only in the type of content, but also in the way that content is delivered or written[1].

Personal Blogs: The personal blog, an ongoing diary or commentary by an individual, is the traditional, most common blog. Personal bloggers usually take pride in their blog posts, even if their blog is never read by anyone but them. Blogs often become more than a way to just communicate; they become a way to reflect on life or works of art. Blogging can have a sentimental quality. Few personal blogs rise to fame and the mainstream, but some personal blogs quickly garner an extensive following. A type of personal blog is referred to as "microblogging," which is extremely detailed blogging as it seeks to capture a moment in time. Sites, such as Twitter, allow bloggers to share thoughts and feelings instantaneously with friends and family and is much faster than e-mailing or writing. This form of social media lends to an online generation already too busy to keep in touch. The Amitabh Bachchan's famous BigBlog is known to all of us.

Corporate Blogs: A blog can be private, as in most cases, or it can be for business purposes. Blogs, either used internally to enhance the communication and culture in a corporation or externally for marketing, branding or public relations purposes are called corporate blogs.

Question & Answer Blogging: It is a type of **blog** that answers questions. Questions can be submitted in the form of a submittal form, or through email or other means such as telephone. Qlogs can be used to display shownotes from podcasts or the means of conveying information through the internet. Many question logs use syndication such as RSS as a means of conveying answers to questions.

By Media Type: A blog comprising videos is called a vlog, one comprising links is called a linklog, a site containing a portfolio of sketches is called a sketchblog or one comprising photoes is called a photoblog. Blogs with shorter posts and mixed media types are called tumblelogs. A rare type of blog hosted on the Gopher Protocol is known as a Phlog.

By Device: Blogs can also be defined by the type of device used to compose it. A blog written by a mobile device like a mobile phone could be called a moblog. One early blog was Wearable Wireless Webcam, an online shared diary of a person's personal life combining text, video, and pictures transmitted live from a wearable computer and EyeTap device to a web site. This practice of semi-automated blogging with live video together with text was referred to as sousveillance. Such journals have been used as evidence in legal matters.

By Genre: Some blogs focus on a particular subject, such as political blogs, travel blogs, house blogs, fashion blogs, project blogs, education blogs, niche blogs, classical music blogs, quizzing blogs and legal blogs (often referred to as a blawgs) or dreamlogs. While not a legitimate type of blog, one used for the sole purpose of spamming is known as a Splog.

Blog Search Engines: Several blog search engines are used to search blog contents, such as Bloglines, BlogScope, and Technorati. Technorati, which is among the most popular blog search engines, provides current information on both popular searches and tags used to categorize blog postings. Research community is working beyond simple

keyword search, by inventing new ways to navigate through huge amounts of information present in the blogosphere, as demonstrated by projects like BlogScope.

4. DRDO Blog

DRDO blog service started by DESIDOC for the DRDO scientists to share their knowledge, not only in their own field, but extended to all subject areas and general topic also. This blog supports Unicode, if one is familiar with Unicode system, he can directly post his queries in any one of the Indian languages

The DRDO blog is powered by Word Press 2.0. The software is having MySql as back-end and PHP as front-end running on Red hat Linux server. It supports themes, so any time its look and feel can be changed without loss of any data. The archives of posting/comments are also maintained month wise.

Figure – 2 Schematic of DRDO Blog on DRDO Intranet

Like other blogs, DRDO blog has also been used by DRDO community in a number of ways.

♦ Information/Promotion of particular technology and systems related to the subject areas like

aeronautics, armaments, combat vehicles, computers, electronics, library and information science etc…

♦ To capture the tacit knowledge of scientists
♦ Individual comments on technical and professional issues
♦ Conference blogging for DRDO community

4.1 How to Post Queries/Comments

DRDO users can register with this blog by giving user name and DRDO intranet e-mail ID to share their knowledge/comments with other colleagues of DRDO. The user can access DRDO blog without registration, but in order to post ones queries/comments, one should have the valid User Name and Password by registering with the system. For registration process one should have email ID. After that one can post his queries/comments on the selected subject categories. There are some subject categories, and one can post a query in the mentioned subject like, Aeronautics, Armaments, Combat Vehicles, Computers, Electronics, General, Library & Information, Life Sciences, Materials, Missiles and Naval Research. If one user wants to post a query besides the above mentioned subject categories, he has to request the Director, DESIDOC to include his subject categories in the DRDO blog.

5. What is a Wiki?

A wiki is a website that allows, and infact encourages, users to share information by freely writing new content, adding to existing content, and editing or commenting on content[2]. It can be viewed as an electronic version of a brain storming session among colleagues when it works well, and it has the advantage of extending the session around

the globe so that like minded individuals can contribute productively to a discussion[4]. However the way wiki exist in the web, some people call it as "information democracy" and for some people, it is "chaos". As a result of the democratic approach to creating an encyclopedia, the focus, length and content of articles is probably different and probably more up-to-date and perhaps more eccentric than in an encyclopedia produced in a usual way[5]. The collaborative encyclopedia like Wikipedia is one of the best-known wikis.[2] Wikis are used in business to provide intranet and Knowledge Management systems.

Howard G. Cunningham, a graduate of Purdue University, is credited with being the prime inventor of wikis. He launched the first wiki site, the WikiWikiWeb on March 25, 1995[5]. "Wiki" (/wiÐkiÐ/) is a Hawaiian word for "fast"[2]. "Wiki Wiki" is a reduplication. "Wiki" can be expanded as "What I Know Is," but this is a backronym.

Wiki can be used in education also to support collaborative work, or to produce a course in cooperation or to distribute information amongst students for the purpose of updating materials.

5.1 Characteristics of a Wiki

Howard G. Cunningham described the essence of the Wiki concept as follows:

♦ A wiki invites all users to edit any page or to create new pages within the wiki Web site, using only a plain-vanilla Web browser without any extra add-ons.

♦ Wiki promotes meaningful topic associations between different pages by making page link

creation almost intuitively easy and showing whether an intended target page exists or not.

♦ A wiki is not a carefully crafted site for casual visitors. Instead, it seeks to involve the visitor in an ongoing process of creation and collaboration that constantly changes the Web site landscape.

A wiki enables documents to be written collaboratively, in a simple markup language using a Web browser. A single page in a wiki website is referred to as a "wiki page", while the entire collection of pages, which are usually well interconnected by hyperlinks, is "the wiki". A wiki is essentially a database for creating, browsing, and searching through information.

6. DRDO Wiki

DRDO wiki is a great tool for E-learning and researching information, has been successfully launched by DESIDOC on 22nd September 2007. As an internal knowledge management solution it will enable users from all DRDO labs to add, modify and edit information on website through their own web browsers. With this DRDO wikipedia every user is reader, author, and editor at the same time. The success of this project builds on the tight involvement of the users, the sense of the community, and a dedication to developing a powerful knowledge repository. The collaborative efforts of contributors and experts from all labs will populate DRDO wiki and in future it will be more information rich and subsequently will be more beneficial for the major projects of DRDO.
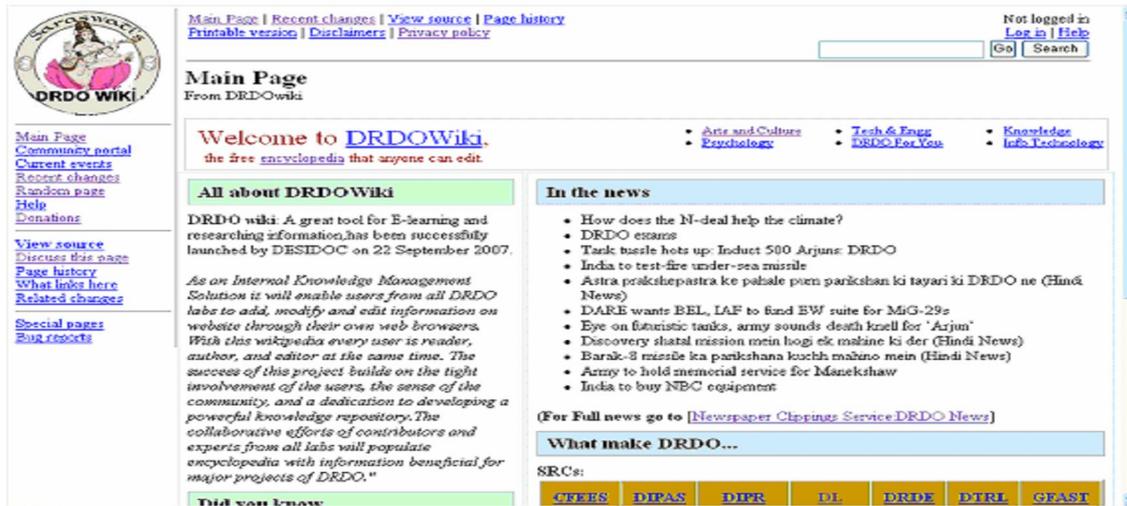
Figure 3 : Schematic of DRDO Wiki on DRDO Intranet

Like DRDO Blog, DRDO Wiki is also maintained and hosted by DESIDOC. DRDO wiki is powered by media wiki version 1.01. The software is having back-end of MySql and entire software is coded in PHP. User permission is open to all for all DRDO employees who have DRONA connection. Any employee of DRDO can edit the wiki. Before editing a page in DRDO wiki, one has to log in to DRDO wiki or else it gives a warning like: You are not logged in. Your IP address will be recorded in this page's edit history. So one can be traced by wiki administrator. In that process, the quality can be maintained over a period of time.

6.1 DRDO Wiki's Statistics

There are 196 total pages in the database. This includes "talk" pages, pages about DRDO wiki, minimal "stub" pages, redirects, and others that probably don't qualify as content pages. Excluding those, there are 45 pages that are probably legitimate content pages. 57 files have been uploaded. There have been a total of 21,107 page views, and 734 page edits since DRDO wiki was setup. That comes to 3.74 average edits per page,

and 28.76 views per edit. There are 59 registered users.

The information on DRDO wiki is segmented into different subject areas like art and culture, psychology, information technology and engineering, DRDO for you, knowledge and information technology. It has different menu options like view page, edit page, post comment etc. Separate links are given for the information on current events, recent changes and community portal. The news related to DRDO is also uploaded on DRDO Wiki on daily basis with the help of DESIDOC news paper clipping service. DRDO Wiki is also getting good response from DRDO community for information sharing regarding particular technology and systems. It has been normally observed that a scientist and his team working on a particular project has a great amount of tacit knowledge with them. If that scientist got retired, transferred or leave the project, his/her valuable knowledge also goes which inherently affects the projects in a great manner. DESIDOC through DRDO Wiki has provided the support to

DRDO community to document/capture their knowledge for followers.

7. Conclusion

The above web technology is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to web 2.0 environment. Many more web technologies to come. The wiki, which started as a sort of experimenting peer review content on a website, has evolved into an increasingly adopted method of enabling collaboration and has become popular among the general communities as well as among DRDO scientific and technical cadre. Although controversies such as the recent debate over the reliability of wikipedia entries continue to rise and blog sites are very short lived, still there is a great demand of all the web technologies to come. In future, it is hoped that the blog and wiki will have a great impact on the user communities and also one needs to explore new ideas to make these technologies relevant and usable.

References

1. **Blog-Wikipedia :** The free encyclopedia - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blogs (Accessed on 30/12/2008)

2. **Wiki-Wikipedia** : The free encyclopedia - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikis (Accessed on 30/12/2008)

3. **Goodfellow, Tom and Graham, Sarah.** The blog as a high impact institutional communication tool, The Electronic Library., 25(4), 2007, 395-400.

4. **Gorman, G.E**. Is the wiki concept really so wonderful?, Online Information Review., 29(3), 2005, 225-226.

5. **Long, Sarah Ann.** Exploring the wiki world : the new face of collaboration, New Library World., 107(122/123), 2006, 157-159.

About Authors

Mr. Bijayananda Pradhan, DESIDOC.

E-mail: ncsipradhan@gmail.com

Mr. Parveen Gupta, DESIDOC.

E-mail: parveen_printing@yahoo.com

.