# Blog: A Handy Tool for Librarians

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*Librarians have to learn how to do a lot with just a little in order to promote awareness of their programs and services. They have seized the opportunities to market libraries in the real world via traditional media: newspapers, corporate newsletters, radio, and TV. Many libraries produce bro- chures, pathfinders, and their own newsletters. So it is no surprise to see librarians stepping up to the plate and spreading the word online with blogs. Savvy librarians have identified blogs as another means to market libraries and their services. The article discusses basics of blogs, like history, types, features and limitations. And also it explains how it's useful for librarians. Finally, few samples of Library blogs are presented and explained to highlight the importance of blogs in libraries.*

## 1.    Introduction

Internet accelerates information overload in the networking world. It has become ubiquitous in nature. Library and Information professionals are forced to use the Internet as a reference tool to do immediate search for primary information. Especially, reference service/desk at the special library, we search the website to find some data, articles, information, etc. The reader would like to keep this link information in the proper form. That is why we chose the bookmark. But the bookmark can be maintained in the PC, it can't be shared in the network environment. Based on this type of need, the Blogs concept arrived in the 1990s. Blogs were originally named Weblogs, a name coined by Jorn Berger in December 1997. This was later shortened to 'Blog'.

Blogs have exploded on the Web, because they have made it much easier to publish content online. Creating web pages with HTML editors was a barrier for many people who were short on time to acquire new skills and to troubleshoot browser issues. Blogging software makes it as easy to publish content online as it is to write a note to post on your fridge. It's really that easy! You don't have to know anything about HTML or how to link from one page to another, let alone upload files with FTP programs to a web server. Signing up for a blog account is easy too. In less than 3 minutes, you can have a blog and area to publish your first entry.

Many librarians started off excitedly creating their first web sites, only to become disillusioned, because of the effort it took to update and maintain content with an often-cumbersome, multi-step process. Blogging software can eliminate most of this drudgery. The power of the blog lies not only in the ease

of publishing new content, but also in its ability to automatically archive old posts and refresh the content of the main page. One very significant factor in the growth of blogs is the blogging community. The ease with which you can link to other sites and blog entries has spawned a frenzy of linking from blog to blog. Almost everyone likes to know that his or her work is read and recognized by others. Bolger's can receive almost-instant feedback as visitors and other bloggers comment on posts and explore mutual ideas.

## 2. What is Blog?

Blog short for Weblog is a web site that contains brief entries arranged in reverse chronological order. Blogs are diverse ranging from personal diaries to news sites. Evan Williams the creator of Blogger describes ,the blog concept is about three things: Frequency, Brevity and Personality,.

There are different descriptions of that concept. According to most of the articles in the Internet "blog is short form for 'weblog', a frequently updated publication of comments and thoughts on the web". Usually it is reflecting the views of the blog's creator. Blogs consist of text and images and are sorted by date. The newest information is on the top and there is an archive of the old one. People create blogs to share their live experience with the world. The person who is updating that journal is called blogger. They write about different topics: from the typical daily situations to the progress of some scientific re-searches. The readers also can leave comments and this make the whole thing more interesting and useful.

## 3. Types of Blog

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.

- ⮑ **Personal Blog:** The personal blog, an ongoing diary or commentary by an individual, 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. A type of personal blog is referred to as 'Micro blogging' which is extremely detailed blogging as it seeks to capture a moment in time. This form of social media lends to an online generation already too busy to keep in touch.

- ⮑ **Corporate Blog:** 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.

- ➲ **Media Blog:** 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 photos is called a 'photoblog'. Blogs with shorter posts and mixed media types are called 'tumblelogs'.

- ➲ **Question Blog:** 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 or VOIP.

- ➲ **Device Blog:** Blogs can also be defined by which type of device is used to compose it. A blog written by a mobile device like a mobile phone or PDA 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.

- ➲ **Subject Blog:** Some blogs focus on a particular subject, such as political blogs, travel blogs, house blogs, fashion blogs, project blogs, education blogs, classical music blogs, quizzing blogs and legal blogs (often referred to as a blawgs).

## 4. History of Blog

Blogs are part of the World Wide Web since its creation. In the beginning they did not have a define name, but their purpose was near to the contemporary ones. Historical development of blogs by chronology is listed below:

- ➲ **1993:** In June 1993 Netscape begins running its 'What New is!' list of sites.

- ➲ **1994:** In January 1994 Justin Hall launches Justin's Home Page which would become Links from the Underground.

- ➲ **1997:** In April 1997 Dave Winer launches Scripting News & in December 1997   'Jorn Barger' coins the term weblog.

- ➲ **1998:** In November 1998 Cameron Barrett publishes the first list of blog sites on 'Camworld'.

- ➲ **1999:** In early 1999 'Peter Merholz' coins the term blog after announcing he was going to pronounce web blogs as "wee-blog". This was then shortened to blog. In July 1999 Pitas launches the first free build your own blog web tool. In March 1999 Brad

Fitzpatrick launched 'LiveJournal' blogging tool & in August 1999 Pyra releases 'Blogger' which becomes the most popular web based blogging tool to date, and popularizes blogging with mainstream internet users.

⊃ **2001:** In 2001 Movable Type was developed by the company Six Apart & publicly announced on 3 September 2001

⊃ **2003:** In 2003 'Wordpress' &' TypPad' launched.

5. **Features of Blogs**

Some important features of blogs are as follows:

⊃ **Highly Interactive:** Blogs can link to other blogs & websites, enabling the linking ideas and hence stimulating knowledge generation and sharing between bloggers. The interactivity depends on the number of regular visitor to you blog.

⊃ **Post as often as you like:** None of the blogging tools (free) restrict the number of entries you can put up or the length of an entry. Now they are also offering free photos & music upload facilities to brighten up you blogs.

⊃ **No Spam filters to maintain:** E-mail spam filters do not blog because they are not an e-mail communication and these are not delivered to any inbox.

⊃ **Create unlimited blogs:** You can create as many blog as you like, on as many subjects as you'd like.

⊃ **Search engine friendly:** Search engines are constantly searching for new content and blogs match this requirement perfectly by constantly changing content. There are numerous web sites that act as blog search engines. e.g.: www.technorati.com , www.blogsearchengine.com & www.blogstreet.com

⊃ **Economical:** In most cases, they are free, but then you need to let them maintain a link back to them on your page. If you don't want that, you could opt for a paid service.

⊃ **Educational:** There's such a variety of informative and educational blogs available that search for any subject usually turn up hundreds of offerings.

➲ **Get Syndication:** Syndication (RSS) is a great way to ensure that your writing and your views are exposed to as much of the general public possible. e.g.: www.typepad.com  or www.blogger.com

## 6.    Limitations of Blogs

Despite of several advantages, it has certain limitations, which are mentioned below:

➲ Though there are a range of tools available to make blogging easier, most authors do not take advantage of them. Blog creation has started to become automated, but the major tools really only cover the basic features of submitting new content before the complexity of managing it starts to become a little too complicated for most users.

➲ There are not enough experts writing professional blogs, and most Weblogs are too personal to be useful to anyone other than online voyeurs.

➲ Blogs are difficult to search and still mainly dependent on the community of blog creators for word of mouth recommendations by cross-posting.

## 7.    Blogging Software's

There are lots of free & paid blogging tool software's available, which help you create and manage your blog site in that few important tools are listed below:

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### Table 1: Blogging software

| SI No | Service Provider | Developed by | Free /Fee | URL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Blogger | Pyra Labs | Both | http://www.blogger.com/ |
| 2 | WordPress | Michel Valdrighi | Free | http://wordpress.org/ |
| 3 | LiveJournal | Brad Fitzpatrick | Both | http://www.livejournal.com/ |
| 4 | TypePad | Six Apart Ltd. | Fee | http://www.typepad.com/ |
| 5 | Blosxom | Rael Dornfest | Free | http://www.blosxom.com/ |
| 6 | Movable Type | Six Apart Ltd. | Both | http://www.movabletype.org/ |

## 8.    How to Create a Simple Blog?

Now a days everyone tend to own their blog. It has almost became a necessity for everyone to have, even the slightest presence on the internet and the blog is the way to go. Why? Because, creating blog is actually very easy, does not involve any type of internet programming knowledge, web designing, host-ing and buying domain names, and the most important of them all, it does not cost you anything.

Therefore, if you have been thinking about how to create blog, then just follow these five steps you will come to know exactly how to start your own blog.

**Step 1: Choose free blogging software:** First you have to decide whether you go with free or paid blogging tool? If you are going with free blogging software tool, select any one free blogging websites. Two of the most popular such websites are blogspot.com and wordpress.com. . If you are a beginner in blogging it is not recommended for you to pay for a blog, because free software will surely satisfy all your needs.

**Step 2: Create an account:** Create your account in selected blogging tool and then register your domain name. Think carefully of your domain name before registering it, because this name will become the identity of your blog and that is what people will need to remember.

**Step 3: Select your theme and other options:** The theme of your blog is up next – in order to know how your blog will look like and how you will customize it and you have to know what the theme is. However, you're not required to do any customization before you start publishing blog posts. Remember one important thing that in order to attract more visitors, blogs usually target one single subject, rather than a great number.

**Step 4: Start Blogging:** Now that you have created the physical support for it (the layout, theme, and categories) it is time for you to start writing. All you have to do is start posting some of your favorite subjects.

**State 5: Update Frequently:** When it comes to creating a serious blog, it is not sufficient to update it simply once in a while. Actually, it is more than recommended that you update it at least twice or three times a week with an interesting content. This way your readers will feel like they are not being neglected and they always have something to read on your blog.

## 9. Application of Blogs in Libraries

There are dozens of ways that librarians are using blogs already. The most obvious application is for library news, which you need to be able to update frequently and easily. Blogs helps make this job easy enough for anyone to do it. Following are some ways for librarians to make effective use of blogs:

### 9.1 New Arrivals Alert

The library might consider utilizing weblog technology to announce new acquisitions to the library collection. There can be multiple weblogs for different types of media or one weblog can be used for the entire collection and each post could be routed to specific categories and the user could choose which ones to read. Syndication will be mentioned later, can use to display new acquisitions. As soon as a book or movie is entered as available, it could query the weblog (categories included), and the new material could be posted to the weblog within minutes.

### 9.2    As a book Talk & book review forum

Blog helps to post new book reviews, book talk and award lists. It invites library users to leave their comments and suggestions. Create an online book discussion area by asking readers to recommend books to others.

### 9.3    User Feedback

Blog acts a very important tool in getting feedback from library user. For that, we need to design a questionnaire in blog and invite user to leave their comment.  It helps us to get a valuable feedback without wasting time and money.

### 9.4    Promote Library Events

It promotes library events like book exhibition, library week, special lectures & some recreational activities by posting them in a blog. A great library blog requires three ingredients: inspiration, motivation, and dedication. Inspiration is that "ah-ha" moment when your new marketing idea meshes perfectly with a blog as the delivery vehicle. Motivation is the energy to put good ideas into practice and helps launch the new blog. Dedication is what comes next.

### 9.5    Market Library Sources & Services

In today's economic climate competition in the market place is increasing the demand for information, while the budgets for libraries are decreasing; it has become especially challenging for many libraries to survive. In this situation, we have to promote our user by creating awareness on existing information resources & services available and how these help them in their work.

### 9.6    Newsletter

Blogs can serve as an alternative to static newsletters for keeping patrons informed about latest happening in general or related to specific subject. It does not have to be tied to a single writer or editor. Responsibility for managing it can be divided among multiple contributors who have the authorization to post and update entries.

### 10.    Some useful LIS Blogs

### 10.1   LIS News

LISNews is a collaborative blog devoted to current events and news in the world of Library and Information Science. A dedicated team of international bloggers scout the World Wide Web to find stories they find interesting. You'll find links to news stories and web sites, along with original writing, interviews and reviews. LISNews was originally conceived and created by Blake Carver on November, 2 1999. Since LISNews is open and collaborative, the diversity of our authors can bring a wide range of view points to the site each and every day.
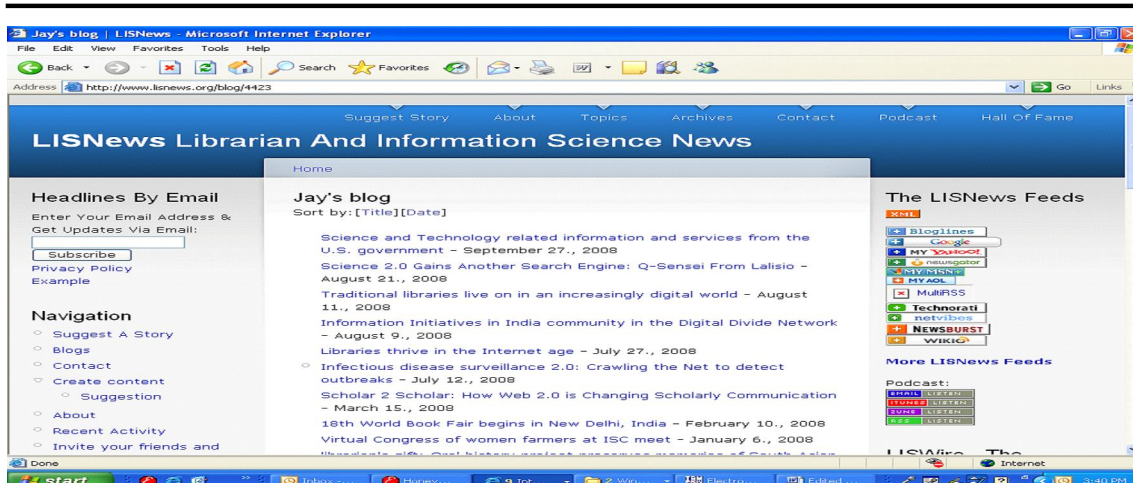
Figure 1: LIS News Blog

URL: http://www.lisnews.org/blog/4423

## 10.2    Research in Library and Information Science

This blog focus on LIS research activities & research resources. It's a good site for one who likes to know more on LIS research. It has been created by Ahilya Deshpande, Librarian of Pragati Mahavidyalaya P.G. College, Hyderabad.



Figure 2: Research in Library and Information Science Blog

URL:    http://researchinlis.blogspot.com/

## 10.3 News from Libraries:

This blog has been developed and maintained by University of Minnesota library from December 2005. It's a perfect blog what we discussed above. It alerts the Minnesota library user on their new arrivals, resources, library events & services.
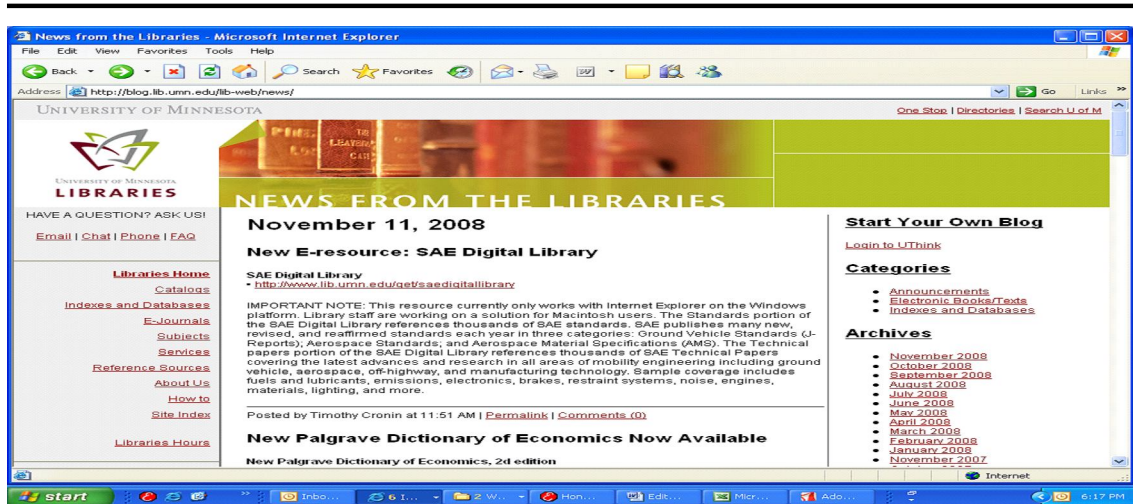
**Figure 3: News from Libraries Blog**

URL: http://blog.lib.umn.edu/lib-web/news/

## 10.4    Catalog blog

This blog has been created by David Bigwood, USA and launched in March 2002. It concentrate on the issues related information processing retrieval means library classification, cataloguing, metadata and related issues.
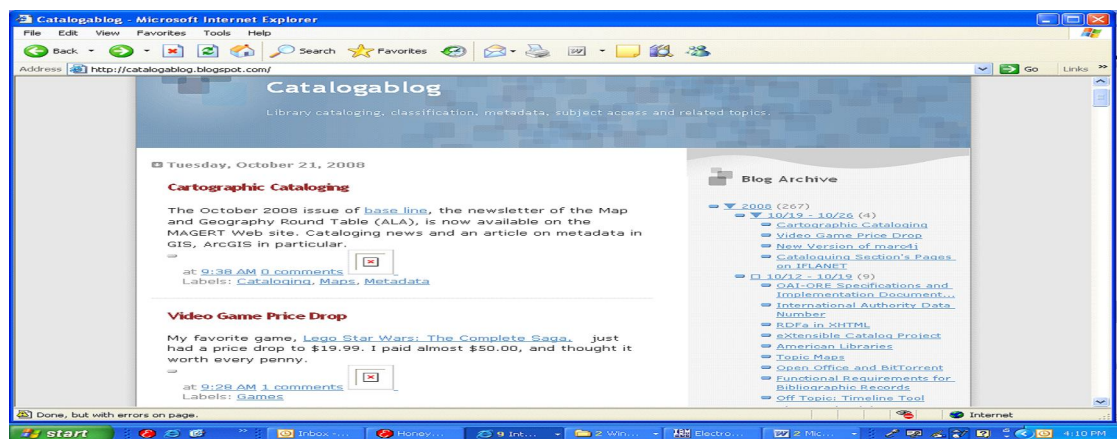


**Figure 4: Catalog Blog**

URL: http://catalogablog.blogspot.com/

## 10.5    Library Blog Index:

This blog is an index of library blogs available across the world created by Greg Schwartz, USA. Any one who hosted his new blog can register in this blog, so it will helps your blog become more interactive one.
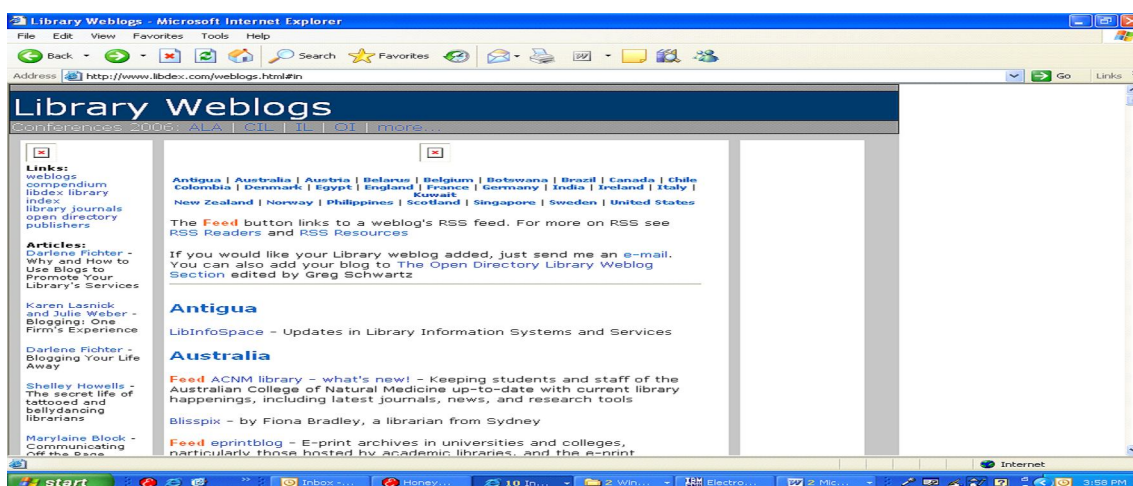
**Figure 5: Library Blog Index Blog**

URL: http://www.libdex.com/weblogs.html#in

## 10.6    Sukhdev Sing Blog

This blog has been created in 1995 by Sukhdev Singh from National Informatics Center, New Delhi (India). It focus on key IT issues, news, happenings and his web findings on Information Science, Library 2.0, Web 2.0, Open Access and Medical Informatics.
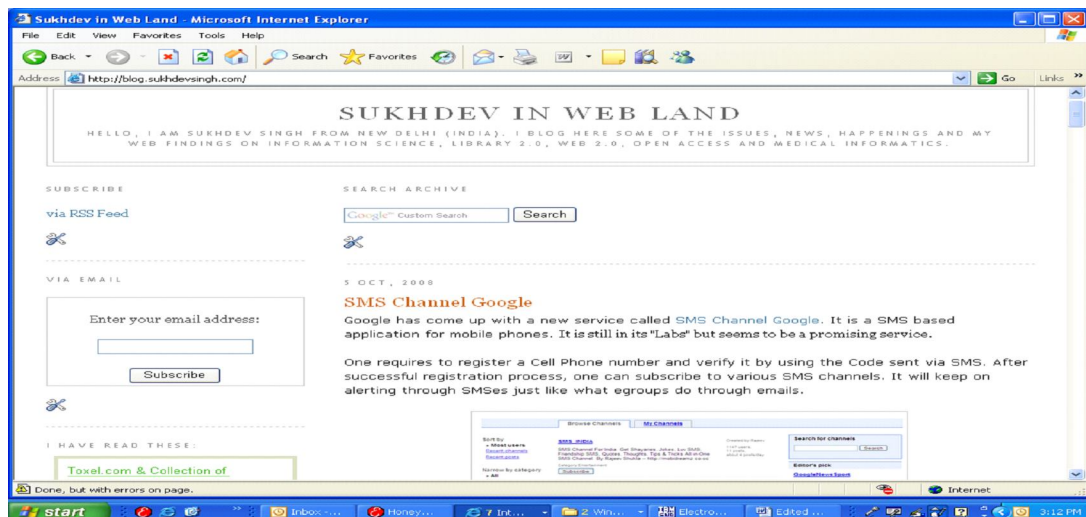


**Figure 6: Sukhdev Sing Blog**

URL: http://blog.sukhdevsingh.com/

**11. Conclusion**

Librarians have always had two primary missions, first on preserving all human knowledge and second on connecting users to the knowledge that can serve them. Based on the updating modality of anywhere from the desktop, chronological order of posts, links to the other source of information and referral linking to other blogs and resources they can be used at the Reference Desk or in the provision of information services. The blog will play a major role in the information service field. As discussed, creating a blog is very simple and it can support the goals of the organization while simultaneously meeting the specific objectives of librarians. Libraries can use blogs to meet general marketing, outreach and technology initiatives. At the same time, librarians can use blogs along with other tools like e-mail to keep patrons continually aware of the services and resources available to assist them in meeting their own research and educational objectives. In future libraries must adopt this technology to provide the effective service.

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