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## Blogging in the Government Information World

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## Outline of Program

- Basic introduction to Blogging and Syndicated Sites/RSS
- What we are doing at Georgia State University
- How to get started on a weblog.
- Jim Jacobs will cover the topics of blogs and rss feeds as a form of future communication and use of XML/RDF for storing, using, and re-using information

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## Blogging and RSS Go Hand in Hand

- A Blog provides the news/information to the reader
- Syndicated sites (using RSS, Atom, etc.) provide the means for the blogger to collect news more efficiently

**Weblog = Blog**

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**Weblogs - Beginnings**

In 1998 there was a handful of blog-like sites which grew to 23 in 1999 when a list was placed online. This caused quick growth due to the filtering function of existing blogs.  
(Adapted from:  
[http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog\\_history.html](http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html) )

Following the March 1999 release by Netscape of the RSS format, the concept of weblogs began to gain attention. Dedicated bloggers adopted the RSS format and it gained an active user population (See Weblog Compendium/RSS History)

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**Development/Importance of Blogs**

Now there are millions of blogs and a culture surrounding it, termed "the Blogosphere"

- Blogs allow grassroot news to be developed or corrected
- Journalists report and consolidate blog leads into stories for a wider audience.
- bloggers then will refer to these news stories, ... for additional news or opinion.
- Example: The events of "post-9/11," generated 1,000's of blogs (sometimes known as "warblogs") The interaction continues to grow. (Adapted from SearchWebsServices.com)

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**Technical Definition of a Weblog**

A weblog is a hierarchy of text, images, media objects and data, arranged chronologically, that can be viewed in an HTML browser.

The center of the hierarchy,...is a sequence of weblog "posts"

(Courtesy of: Berkman Center, Harvard Law School)

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 **Weblogs/Blogs are WEBPAGES that**

- Are online journals or logs
- Consist of brief, frequent postings
- Include link(s) to fuller information
- Have time stamped postings
- Are displayed in reverse chronological order
- Usually have archived postings

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 **Advantages to User**

- Quick source of relevant, focused news, with links.
- User comes at own convenience.
- User can subscribe and be notified of updates.
- Often see List of other relevant blogs (Blogrolls)

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 **Advantages of Weblogs (Blogs) for Government Documents Staff**

- Easy to produce – use web-based form.
- Can be updated at any internet workstation.
- Blogger can automatically collect news from sites via subscription to RSS news feed aggregators.
- Can keep reader updated with low cost (e.g. substitute for newsletter)
- Can provide archive of postings automatically
- Multiple contributors easily accommodated.

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 **Disadvantages?**

- Just one more thing to do ....
- Keep pages updated to retain viewer interest: (many promising sites fizzle out.....)
- Locating suitable news can be a challenge

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However, it does not have to take a lot of time to maintain!

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 **Sources of External News**

- Listserves: govdoc-l, lpss-l
- Rich sites You already know about
- Surfing the net for good content
- E-mail notification, e.g. Atlanta's "City in the News", Census, NIH
- Subscribe to syndicated sites

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 **What are Syndicated Feeds?**

- A Syndicated Feed allows the user to subscribe to and automatically receive the new postings from a blog site
- A Syndicated Feed allows the producer to make the website postings available for automatic delivery to the user
- LOOK for Orange XML or RSS button – a signal that a site is set up as a syndicated news feed

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 **RSS Is Currently the Preferred Syndication Format**

- Most commonly known format is RSS
  - Real [ly] Simple Syndication (RSS) or
  - Rich Site Summary
- “Really Simple Syndication is a lightweight XML format designed for sharing headlines and other Web content.”  
<http://www.webreference.com/authoring/languages/xml/rss/intro/>

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 **How to Identify a Syndicated Site?**

- Orange button on sites
  - means an RSS feed has been created and the content is syndicated for use in an aggregator.
  - You can add or bookmark the blog address in your favorite internet addresses, or place the address in your news aggregator.
  - Example: Instruction for adding US Department of Education’s “ED RSS” to news aggregator are:
    - First, get a “news reader” (also known as a “news aggregator”)....
      - Second, add the ED.gov RSS feed to your news reader, using address:  
<http://www.ed.gov/rss/edgov.xml>

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 **Syndicated Sites Provides**

- User to subscribe to any sites with RSS feed
- New postings go to folder in central location to be viewed
- Subscribe directly or bookmark on site at orange XML button.
- Subscribe to be automatically updated through free service such as [www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com)

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 **RSS Aggregators**

**Advantages:**

- Services that provide the ability to collect news feed from user-selected sites
- Easy to use
- Free

**Examples:**

- [www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com)

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 **Useful Documents-Related Sites**

- Gary Price's Resource Shelf  
<http://www.lisfeeds.com/feeds/resourceshelf.html>
  - Docuticker - new reports from government agencies, ngo's, think tanks, and other groups. <http://www.resourceshelf.com/docuticker/>
- RSS In Government - **News about how RSS is being used by international, federal, state, and local governments**
  - [www.rssgov.com](http://www.rssgov.com)

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 **Some Federal Government Blog Sites**

- Census Bureau  
<http://www.census.gov/newonsite/index.rdf>
- Department of Education  
<http://www.ed.gov/rss/edgov.xml>
- National Institute of Health  
<http://www.nih.gov/news/feed.xml>

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 **More Federal Sites**

- NOAA – Earthquake and Hurricane sites  
[www.nhc.noaa.gov/index-at.xml](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/index-at.xml)
- State Department /  
[http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/products/washfile/rss\\_news\\_feed.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/products/washfile/rss_news_feed.html) for links to Department of State rss feeds

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 **State Governments Leading**

- Missouri – brand new and fairly comprehensive state government coverage
- Ohio Public Utility (PUCO)
- Texas Governor’s Office
- Utah – Entire State Government!
- Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau (WLRB) – subscribe to individual channels  
(Source: [WWW.rssgov.com](http://WWW.rssgov.com) )

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 **Examples of OTHER Government Bloggers?**

- Aberdeen Scotland – one the first cities
- Some Canadian provinces
- US Senators (Pioneers)
  - Senator Biden (D-Del) – 1<sup>st</sup> Senator @ RSS news feed
  - Sen. Daschle (D-SD weblog, but no RSS feed)
- Many Senators and Representatives are now using RSS feeds

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 **GA STATE UNIVERSITY GETS INTO BLOGS**

- Ga. State University Web Librarian and Web software Programmer developed a Content Management System (CMS) for webpages
- Combined efforts to run a proprietary system based on MySQL for Library News**
- Science Librarian** involved in planning and early use
- Subject Liaisons and Documents Librarian began subject blogs in Fall 2003 - Spring 2004

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 **Documents Librarian Gets into Blogging**

- Switched from emailing updates to subject liaisons/Reference Desk to public blog
  - E.g. new Census releases,
- Recently began subscription to Bloglines to minimize web searches for content

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 **Decision Making for Content**

- It takes time to sort through the feeds to select interesting/useful sites
- What are the areas of focus?
- Who are the users?
- Duplication with other News groups on Library page?
- What is appropriate?

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 **What to Include?**

- Library/documents Additions and changes
- Local interest - City of Atlanta? State of Georgia
- Major Federal Releases? Calls for Legislative Support?
- Opinion Pieces? Balance of content?
- What to put on public site vs. staff Intranet?

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 **Other Concerns**

- Allow Comments on page? (We can screen these)
- Privacy issues ?
- Copyright issues
  - Images/maps – highly protected
- Issues relating to using listserves as source

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 **Best Practices ?**

- Write for entire audience
- Institution – recognizable logo and feel to site? Standard type font and format?
- Expiration of Source Availability?
- Privacy, giving credit
- Copyright Issues

<http://georgiasla.blogspot.com/2004/06/blog-style-manual.html>

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 **Statistics on Use of the Page**

- GSU uses “Web Trends” software
- Monthly reports on Blog visitors from April 2004
- Some ways to look at data
  - Broken down by indexing terms
  - Time of use
  - Source of visitors/ characteristics

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 **Considerations before starting**

What is the purpose of the blog?

- Audience?
- Achieve what?

How is it to be configured?

- Individual/unit effort?
- Fit into Library-wide effort?

What resources are available?

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 **Content/Purpose of Blog**

- Communicate library news
- New Additions to Collection
- Relevant news relating to government
- Online education – perhaps some essays
- Official sources only or quantity and kind of non-official information?

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## Ways To Start a Blog

- Use a Free Service –
  - (e.g. Blogspot)
- Limited features, but easy to register and use
- Pay a modest fee - subscribe to service (e.g. Moveable Type)
- More features, multiple contributors, modest fee
- Develop own proprietary system (Ga. State U's choice)
- Develop desired features but need technical staff with computer facilities

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## Formatting Blog Postings

- Choose a clear, descriptive header
- Provide brief details with links
- Give Credit to source or informant

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## Getting News Automatically Via Feeds (e.g. Bloglines)

- Subscribe to RSS Services through aggregator: [www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com) or other aggregator service
- Enter list of newsfeeds for subscription sites
  - At news site, right click orange XML button to identify and copy shortcut of file name
  - Add RSS feed by pasting xml/rss address into form in news aggregator
- To view list of news feed, got "MyFeeds" on aggregator page, where it has automatically harvested new content. (Other services may post to your Desktop)

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 **Useful Library Related Sites**

- Resource Shelf – Resources and News for Information professionals (Gary Price) <http://resourcesshelf.com>
- Georgia SLA (Teri Vogel) [www.georgiasla.blogspot.com](http://www.georgiasla.blogspot.com)

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 **NEED MORE SITES?**

- [blogwithoutalibrary](http://www.blogwithoutalibrary.net/index)– includes list of libraries with blogs
- LibDex <http://www.libdex.com/weblogs.html>

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 **Weblog Development Tools**

EXAMPLES:

- Blogspot.com [www.blogspot.com](http://www.blogspot.com)
- Moveable Type.org <http://www.movabletype.org/>

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## RSS Readers

- Desktop readers
  - NewzCrawler <http://www.newzcrawler.com/>
  - Syndic8.com
- Web-based Readers (Bloglines)

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## Web Resources

- Guides to Readers (numerous links and tutorials)
  - DMOZ Open Directory Project
  - Weblogs Compendium  
<http://www.lights.com/weblogs/tools.html>
- WebReference.com - One of many useful sites on RSS with links to articles  
<http://www.webreference.com/authoring/languages/xml/rss/>

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## Articles

- Blogosphere [definition]  
[http://searchwebservices.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid26\\_gci1007574,00.html](http://searchwebservices.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid26_gci1007574,00.html)
- RSS for Non-Techie Librarians (Cohen)  
<http://www.llrx.com/features/rssforlibrarians.htm>
- "Untangling Blogs & RSS" Paper presented at Special Libraries Association, Georgia Chapter, May 11, 2004. (Goans and Vogel)
- <http://www.library.gsu.edu/scholarship/presentations/vogel-2004-05-11-blogs-rss-sla.pdf>
- Bloggging and RSS –The What's It and How to...for Educators (Will Richardson).  
<http://www.infotoday.com/MMSchools/jan04/richardson.shtml>

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