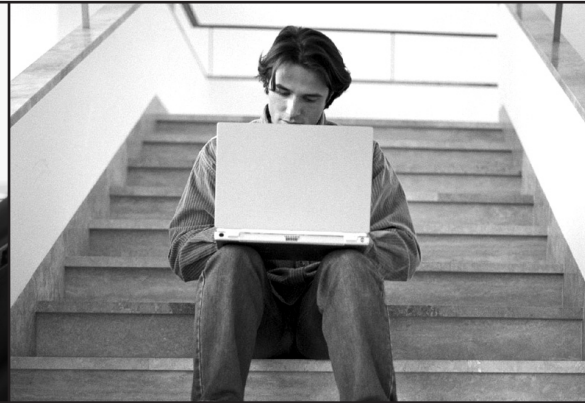
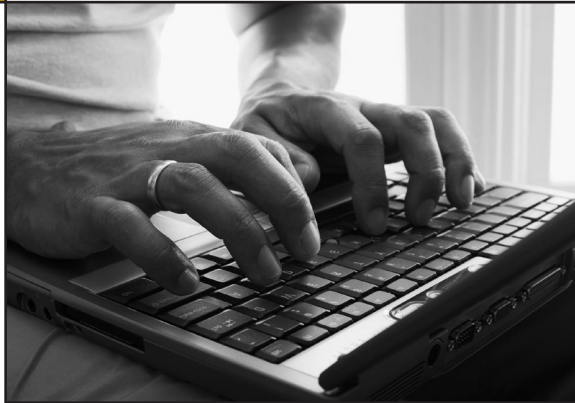


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The Blogging Revolution: Government in the Age of Web 2.0

E-Government Series



David C. Wyld
Maurin Professor of Management and
Director of the Strategic e-Commerce/
e-Government Initiative
Department of Management
Southeastern Louisiana University



IBM Center for
**The Business
of Government**

2007

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Please note that the online version of this report contains hot links to each of the websites discussed or listed in the report. Due to the nature of online publishing, links may have changed or become inactive in the time since this text was authored.

FOREWORD

On behalf of the IBM Center for The Business of Government, we are pleased to present this report, “The Blogging Revolution: Government in the Age of Web 2.0,” by David C. Wyld.

The revolution of social networks and blogging is finally coming to government. Since the dawn of the 21st century just seven short years ago, how we communicate as a society has begun to change rapidly. Over 60 million individuals maintain a blog—a user-generated online journal updated regularly by the author of the blog.

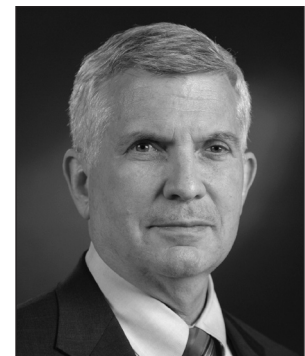
Even more participate in social networks such as Facebook, MySpace, and Second Life, which all allow interactivity among their users. Government, however, has been more cautious in entering this new world. This report describes what the author terms “blogoneers,” pioneers in the use of blogs in government.

Dr. Wyld examines the phenomenon of blogging in the context of the larger revolutionary forces at play in the development of the second-generation Internet, where interactivity among users is key. This is also referred to as “Web 2.0.” Wyld observes that blogging is growing as a tool for promoting not only online engagement of citizens and public servants, but also offline engagement. He describes blogging activities by members of Congress, governors, city mayors, and police and fire departments in which they engage directly with the public. He also describes how blogging is used within agencies to improve internal communications and speed the flow of information.

Based on the experiences of the blogoneers, Wyld develops a set of lessons learned and a checklist of best practices for public managers interested in following in their footsteps. He also examines the broader social phenomenon of online social networks and how they affect not only government but also corporate interactions with citizens and customers.

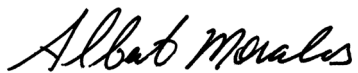


Albert Morales

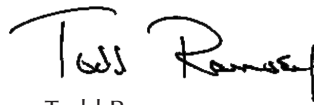


Todd Ramsey

We hope that this report both informs and inspires public managers across government to consider ways of engaging in the new world of Web 2.0 to improve citizen access to public services, as well as to enhance democracy in our society.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There can be no doubt that the Internet has profoundly changed our work, our lives, our entertainment, and our politics. Now the Internet itself is undergoing perhaps its most radical change ever, as we are seeing what many experts have coined the development of “Web 2.0.”

With Web 2.0, there is a sea change occurring wherein the web has become a truly participatory media; instead of going on the web to read static content, we can more easily create and share our own ideas and creations. The rise of what has been alternately referred to as consumer- or user-generated media (content) has been hailed as being truly groundbreaking in nature. This ability to create web content by simply typing words and pointing and clicking, without having to know *anything* about computer programming, has been touted by Tim Berners-Lee, the developer of the World Wide Web, as being much more in line with the original vision of what the web should be. From the perspective of Jeffrey Cole of the Center for the Digital Future at the University of Southern California, these new tools are nothing short of revolutionary in that they “let anyone distribute their ideas potentially to tens of millions of people. It’s totally reversed the whole history of mass communications” (opinion cited in Kornblum, 2006, n.p.). In fact, in December 2006, the editorial staff of *Time* magazine named “you” as its “person of the year.” The magazine recognized that the collective efforts of millions of individuals were fast reshaping the Internet and the way we live our lives.

As of 2007, we are still likely in the early stages of the development of what will become Web 2.0. However, blogging is certainly at the forefront of Web 2.0 technologies. In a nutshell, a blog can be differentiated from a website in that it is a web

vehicle that is easier to create and update, typically by simply typing into a preprogrammed interface. From a definitional perspective, a blog refers to an online journal that can be updated regularly, with entries typically displayed in chronological order. While blogs now encompass not only text but video and audio as well, it is generally accepted that if the individual posts, items, or articles cannot be linked to separately via a permalink (rather than just linking to the whole site), then the site in question is not a blog. Blogs are also commonly referred to as a weblog or web log, with *blog* used as the short form of these terms. *Blog* is also a verb, meaning to write an article on such an online journal.

As detailed in this report, blogging is an activity that is increasingly moving from the fringes to the mainstream, with intense interest in both corporate America and public offices as to how to join the conversation. There are currently 60 million blogs in existence as of April 2007, and the blogosphere (the sum of all blogs) is growing at a rapid rate, with everyone from teenagers, CEOs, and, yes, politicians—from the halls of Congress to city halls across America—joining in the conversation. In the end, blogs may well become, as AOL Vice President Bill Schreiner described them, an “oral history” for our times (eMarketer, 2005c). Thus, it will be incumbent upon public sector leaders and private sector executives to stay abreast of the development of the blogging phenomenon.

In this research report, the author examines the phenomenon of blogging in the context of the larger revolutionary forces at play in the development—or redevelopment—of a second-generation Internet. In the first part of the report, the state of blogging across the American public sector is examined,

seeing how pioneering leaders (let's call them "blogoneers") in the public sector are making use of this new technology to foster improved communications both with their constituencies and within their organizations. Blogging is fast becoming a new tool for promoting online *and* offline engagement. The author provides a comprehensive assessment to date of the blogging activities found across all levels of government, including blogs from:

- Members of Congress
- Congressional committees and caucuses
- Governors and lieutenant governors
- State legislators
- City managers and mayors
- Police and fire departments
- College and university presidents

This report includes a case study of the experience of the U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM), which has led the way in using blogging to transform the culture and flow of information, prompted by the need for speed in fighting today's challenges. Public officials are encouraged to engage in blogging in the honest, open, and consistent manner that is required to promote civic and organizational engagement—and ultimately to succeed—in this exciting time in the history of our democracy. To facilitate this for the reader, the report examines the lessons learned by these blogoneers and presents a series of tips for public sector bloggers, based on an analysis of the best practices available today.

In the second part of this report, the rise of blogging and user-generated media is examined as a wider social phenomenon, which many are now commonly referring to as Web 2.0. In *Blogging 101*, an overview of the history of blogs and the growth and diversity of the blogosphere is presented. The report then examines how blogging has taken hold in the corporate realm, and how leading firms and innovative executives and companies are entering the blogosphere. Blogging is also examined as an effective mechanism for improving internal communications and for managing knowledge, projects, shifts, and even the corporate culture. The potential downsides of blogging, in terms of both the personal productivity and employment issues as well as the

security and liability concerns, are examined. The importance of monitoring the blogosphere for what is being said about you and your organization is discussed.

In the third part, a research agenda for studying the impact and effectiveness of blogging and for developing usable metrics for assessing the utility and return on investment (ROI) of blogging in the unique environment of the public sector is presented. The report distinguishes between blogging for political campaigns and for administration of government, and thus there needs to be a great deal of research as to how the two interact and provide synergy as well as conflict. The report also looks ahead to future directions in both technology and democracy. New Web 2.0 technologies that are emerging (such as "Second Life," which is already drawing political interest) are examined.

Writing in *Public Opinion Quarterly* in 2003, Jennings and Zeitner observed that any attempt to assess the impact of the Internet on the American public and public life in America "involves shooting at a moving target" (p. 311). Thus, this report stands at best as a snapshot of the early advance of a tide of changes that will be coming about in all aspects of our lives, including government and governance in the age of Web 2.0.

10 Tips for Blogging by Public Sector Executives

Tip 1: Define yourself and your purpose.

Tip 2: Do it yourself!

Tip 3: Make a time commitment.

Tip 4: Be regular.

Tip 5: Be generous.

Tip 6: Have a "hard hide."

Tip 7: Spell-check.

Tip 8: Don't give too much information.

Tip 9: Consider multimedia.

Tip 10: Be a student of blogging.

Part I: The Rise of Blogging in the Public Sector

Introduction

Moving Toward Citizen Engagement in a Virtual Age

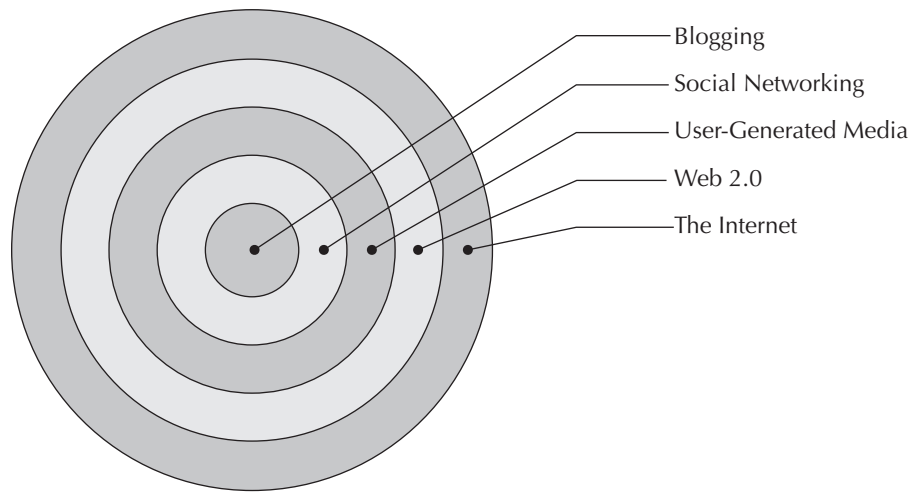
Writing in *Foreign Policy*, Drezner and Farrell (2004) hit upon an amazing reality of modern life. Today, unlike at any time in the advance of history, people simply no longer need to leave their houses to participate in a revolution. With the advent of new technologies, new means can be used to foster online engagement, in both the individual and collective sense, and to create new dialogues between government and citizens (Reece, 2006).

In “Six Trends Transforming Government,” senior leaders of the IBM Center for The Business of Government identified engaging citizens in government as one of the key trends that are reshaping how government works and, in reality, how we as citizens relate to and think about our government. They commented:

Representative democracy has been the traditional approach for how democratic government works. In the United States, this occurs through Congress, state legislatures, and city halls. In those forums, informed and deliberative debates can occur, resulting in collective decisions. But in the past decade, an increasing trend has been the creation of broader direct engagement with citizens in informing and making decisions that affect them. Technology is beginning to create a new set of forums that allows this on a larger scale. This technology extends from the traditional forum for citizen participation—voting—to new and innovative approaches, such as the use of surveys, wikis, and blogs (Abramson, Breul, and Kamensky, 2006, p. 20).

Steven Clift (2006) of Publicus.net summed up the paradox of participation for governments at all levels around the world: “Overall, our parliaments and city councils have approved billions for technology investments for government administration but very little that will help them connect with and better represent citizens” (n.p.). The changes occurring in online citizen participation in government, whether referred to as Democracy 2.0, Citizenship 2.0, or Governance 2.0, are very real. It is ironic that such low-cost or free Web 2.0 tools and forums can have so much impact on improving communications and the workings of government. Likewise, building on the concepts of Graf and Darr (2004), we have early evidence that online “influentials” are more active in both online and “real world” politics and government affairs. Thus, we may be at the cusp of seeing a “benevolent” and much more interactive circle of engagement and participation.

This report examines the phenomenal growth of blogging, in the context of the larger revolutionary forces at play in the development or redevelopment of a second-generation Internet. We discuss what might be labeled “The Virtual Family Mosaic,” as shown in Figure 1, analyzing the rise of a more accessible, interactive Internet. In the first part of this report, we explore the state of blogging across the American public sector, seeing how pioneering leaders (let’s call them “blogoneers”) at all levels are making use of this new technology to foster improved communications both with their constituencies and within their organizations. In the second part of this report, we take a look at the rise of blogging and user-generated media as a wider social phenomenon, which many are now commonly referring to as Web 2.0. We then explore how blogging has taken hold in the corporate realm, and how leading firms and innovative executives and

Figure 1: The Virtual Family Mosaic

companies are entering the blogosphere (the sum of all blogs). We examine some of the very real benefits of blogging and some of the very real personnel and policy issues that are raised by blogging. In the third part, we then look ahead to future directions in researching the development of these new engaging technologies and future trends in technology and democracy.

According to Mort Zuckerman (2005), editor-in-chief of *U.S. News & World Report*, “Blogs are transforming the way Americans get information and think about important issues. It’s a revolutionary change—and there’s no turning back” (n.p.). The trend is clear that the blogosphere will continue to grow, and with that growth, it will become more and more common for highly placed corporate executives and public officials to become bloggers themselves. In fact, over the next few years, those public officials who do not blog may become suspect as to why they do not use this new technology as a communications medium to connect with both their internal organizations and their wider constituencies. Writing in the prestigious journal *Foreign Policy*, Drezner and Farrell (2004) commented: “Although the blogosphere remains cluttered with the teenage angst of high school students, blogs increasingly serve as a conduit through which ordinary and not-so-ordinary citizens express their views on international relations and influence a policymaker’s decision making” (n.p.).

One caveat. Blogs are increasingly being used as a staple of campaign websites; witness the trend of 2008 presidential candidates announcing their intentions in video posts on their websites (Healy, 2007). However, this report draws a strict demarcation between the use

of blogs by officeholders and by candidates. While the business of government is inextricably tied to the business of campaigning, all members of Congress must abide by federal election guidelines to keep separate their official office business (and their web activities) from their campaign efforts. Likewise, state and local officials adhere to similar legal and ethical bright lines. While Republicans and Democrats may argue over which party knows the most about blogging and blogs (Glover, 2006a), the trend is toward blogs as being a key part of both governing and campaigning. This was made even more clear when, in March 2006, the Federal Election Commission recognized the Internet as “a unique and evolving mode of mass communication and political speech” that is exempt from campaign finance rules because it is a form of media (Glover, 2006b).

As of 2007, we are still in the early stages of the “Web 2.0 revolution.” This report stands at best as a snapshot of the early advance of a tide of changes that will be coming about in all aspects of our lives, including government and governance.

You!

Consider every blog, every blog post, every comment on a blog, every trackback to a blog, every video and audio file posted on the Internet (even those that involve characters from *Star Wars* or silly dances—or both put together). Separately, they may seem innocuous or inane, and they truly meet Lincoln’s test of being “little noted nor long remembered.” Yet, collectively, they can be seen as nothing less than revolutionary.

Blogs in the *Congressional Record*

The first mentions of blogging have already made their appearance in congressional debate:

The first mention of blogging in the *Congressional Record* goes to Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME), which occurred in 2006. Senator Snowe made the reference in a debate over the proposed constitutional amendment to prohibit burning of the American flag. Speaking in support of the amendment, Snowe said: “Write letters to the editor. Start a website. Create a blog. Organize. Leaflet. March. Chant. Speak out. Petition. Do any and all of these things, but do not burn our flag” (quoted in Hynes, 2006, n.p.). Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) responded: “The Constitution is not a blog for venting political opinions, currying favor with voters, or trying to bump up sagging poll numbers” (quoted in Glover, 2006c, n.p.).

The first mention of a blog in a Senate nomination hearing occurred in 2006 during the confirmation hearings for Chief Justice John Roberts. Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) asked the soon-to-be Chief Justice a question based on a post he had read the night before on the Volokh Conspiracy blog (<http://www.volokh.com/>) (Glover, 2006a).

Whether it is termed by analysts as Web 2.0, user- or consumer-generated media, or social networks, there is a sea change occurring wherein the web has become a truly participatory media. The rise of what has been alternately referred to as consumer- or user-generated media (content) has been hailed as being truly revolutionary in nature. From the perspective of Jeffrey Cole of the Center for the Digital Future at the University of Southern California: “Tools on the Net, from blogging to videos, let anybody be a publisher and journalist. It lets anyone distribute their ideas potentially to tens of millions of people. It’s totally reversed the whole history of mass communications” (opinion cited in Kornblum, 2006, n.p.).

We are certainly at an inflection point in the evolving history of the Internet. This is because of the rise of the new “you” phenomenon. Consider that:

- In June 2006, *Business 2.0* magazine ranked the 50 most important people in business today. The list was full of “the usual suspects,” like Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, Steve Jobs, Rupert Murdoch, Richard Branson, Warren Buffett, Jeff Bezos, and the “Google Guys” (Sergey Brin and Larry Page). However, the list was topped by a surprising choice: “you.” The *Business 2.0* magazine staff (2006) chose “you” (meaning all of us) because with the advent of user- or consumer-generated media, we are entering a world of “the consumer as creator” (n.p.).
- In December 2006, the editorial staff of *Time* magazine named “you” as its “person of the year.” The magazine recognized the collective

efforts of millions of individuals that are fast reshaping the Internet and the way we live. *Time* recognized “you”—again meaning all of us—“for seizing the reins of the global media, for founding and framing the new digital democracy, for working for nothing and beating the pros at their own game” (Grossman, 2006). *Time’s* managing editor, Richard Stengel, said that the magazine made its decision based on the fact that “we just felt there wasn’t a single person who embodied this phenomenon” (quoted in McShane, 2006, n.p.).

- Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates has categorized the rise of user-generated content on the web as nothing less than a “fantastic thing” (Swisher and Mossberg, 2006, p. R6).
- In December 2005, *Business Week* magazine dubbed today’s youth as the “MySpace Generation” or, more accurately, as “Generation @,” due to the way they are comfortably existing both in the “real world” and the virtual one (Hempel and Lehman, 2005).

Certainly, Web 2.0 has garnered the attention of not just the press, but big business as well. The year 2006 saw headlines made when Google bought YouTube for \$1.6 billion and Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp acquired MySpace for \$580 million (Harvey, 2007). Marketers are also seeing social networking sites (SNS) as a burgeoning and attractive audience, with analysts predicting that advertising on SNS sites will surpass \$2 billion annually by 2010 (Vasquez, 2006). Yet, to date, why has the Web 2.0 revolution not carried over to government

to any great extent? From the perspective of Gerry McGovern, a noted expert on what he has labeled “the content revolution”: “Look at the way Amazon taps into the buying habits of customers, or how eBay uses voting and rating. It’s the ‘Wisdom of Crowds’ concept that James Surowiecki wrote about in his book, and it works—under certain circumstances. However, I have seen very little of that activity in the government world, even at the basic level. There aren’t too many blogs on government websites, and few politicians or administrators engage with constituents using these techniques” (quoted in D’Agostino, 2006, n.p.).

Blogging in the Public Sector

Preface

[A] website, in most cases, is a static collection of documents—information-rich but often perceived by site visitors as a dead brochure, its pages too often written by anonymous authors in an impersonal, public-relations style. A weblog, however, can bring a voice of authenticity to a website, with a more personal and engaging tone that has wider appeal. During the depression era of the 1930s, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt began using the mass communication medium of radio to address the American people about public issues in a series of what he called “fireside chats.” The effectiveness of these addresses was in part due to FDR’s ability to deliver them in an informal and relaxed tone, while making the listener feel as if he was talking directly to them. Likewise, the radio addresses by Winston Churchill during WW II. Although the issues are less weighty and the audiences vastly smaller, a weblog (or blog) offers a civic leader the same opportunity—a one-to-one conversation with an audience of many (Wigley, 2005, n.p.).

In a nutshell, a blog can be differentiated from a website in that it is a web vehicle that is easier to create and update. From a definitional perspective, a blog refers to an online journal that can be updated regularly, with entries typically displayed in chronological order. While blogs now encompass not only text but video and audio as well, it is generally accepted that if the individual posts, items, or articles cannot be linked to separately via a permalink (rather than just linking to the whole site), then the site in question is not a blog. Blogs are also

commonly referred to as a weblog or web log, with *blog* being the short form of these terms. *Blog* is also a verb, meaning to write an article on such an online journal. Please see the Appendix for an extensive glossary of blogging and Web 2.0 terms.

As detailed in the analysis in the second part of this report, blogs are a fast-growing part of the wider social phenomenon of Web 2.0. In the world of public affairs and across the public sector, “blogs are becoming more respectable,” according to Henry Farrell, professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University (quoted in Glover, 2006c, n.p.) Budd (2005) projected that the principal benefits of blogging in government are “to communicate directly with the community, bypassing both internal and news based editorial control” and to “give a human face to often monolithic organizations” (n.p.). In fact, in enumerating the benefits of blogs in government, Bev Godwin of USA.gov (2006) touted the fact that blogging “puts a human face on government, [and] makes government more ‘open.’ ” (n.p.). Indeed, Bill Gates characterized blogging as being “all about openness. People see them as a reflection of an open, communicative culture that isn’t afraid to be self-critical” (quoted in Kirkpatrick, 2005, n.p.).

Bloggers and blog readers have also been categorized as being an attractive, different audience for both public and private sector organizations. As we will see in the demographics of bloggers and blog readers in the second part of this report, they are better educated, more diverse, and more urban than the American population as a whole. Also, from a political perspective, blog readers and authors are more politically involved and interested in both the online and offline worlds. The blog audience was first

described as being political “influentials” through the work of Graf and Darr (2004), who found early evidence that blog readers’ online activities translate into real-world political influence. Their study for George Washington University’s Institute for Politics, Democracy, and the Internet found that 69 percent of blog readers are opinion leaders with their immediate circle of friends, family, and co-workers—and with the audience they reach in their own blogs. As such, the online blog audience was compared by Dr. Darr to “honeybees, kind of feeding the culture with the information they gather and with their comments and diaries at the sites (quoted in Glover, 2006c, n.p.). Glenn Reynolds, the author of *An Army of Davids*, a book on the explosion of blogging, recently summarized this idea in observing: “Bloggers and blog-readers are ‘influentials’—the minority that pays attention to events outside of political and news cycles” (quoted in Johnson, 2006, n.p.).

In July 2004, then-chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Michael Powell, began a blog to help get input on policy issues. Chairman Powell stated:

One reason I am participating in AlwaysOn Network’s blog is to hear from the tech community directly and to try to get beyond the traditional inside the Beltway Washington world where lobbyists filter the techies. I am looking forward to an open, transparent, and meritocracy-based communication—attributes that bloggers are famous for! Regulated interests have about an 80-year head start on the entrepreneurial tech community when it comes to informing regulators what they want and need, but if anyone can make up for that, Silicon Valley can. This is important not just for Silicon Valley—it’s essential to insure that America has the best, most innovative communications infrastructure (Powell, 2004, n.p.).

Powell responded to comments made on his blog, complimenting the participants for the impressive “breadth and depth” of their input (although anonymous commenters did question the chairman on a variety of off-topic issues, including why Howard Stern had been repeatedly fined by the FCC for discussing sexual topics that Oprah Winfrey had also featured on her television show, with no repercussions)

(Anonymous, 2004). He observed that the blog was “an amazing way to hear the views of bright people who share a passion for the direction of our country” (Powell, 2004, n.p.). While there was criticism of his efforts for not truly being a “blog,” the effort still stands as an important milestone of public sector blogging by a high-ranking federal official (Godwin, 2006).

Blogging Options for Public Officials

We can develop a typology of four different types of blogs for public officials, adapted from the Congressional Management Foundation (2005):

- **The Travel Blog:** Highlights elected officials’ travels in and around their district or jurisdiction, or perhaps foreign trips.
- **The Blow-by-Blow Blog:** Emphasizes reports from elected representatives while their respective deliberative body is in session. In this way, officials can update constituents on the status of pending bills and other actions.
- **The Personal Blog:** Provides elected officials’ views on particular issues, perspectives on events, and/or updates on their activities and even those of their families and friends.
- **The Team Blog:** Allows a caucus or group of elected representatives/officials to share a blog. For example, the Oregon House Democrats have a joint blog (www.oregonhousedemocrats.blogs.com) where all 31 Democrats in the State House of Representatives can communicate with constituents across the state. Creating a common site reduces the burden on individual officials to administer the blog, while creating the prospect for more frequent updates because of the number of contributors to the blog.

A final option for blogging by public officials is to post on other blogs rather than maintain one of their own. By posting on such a third-party site, such as that of a newspaper or magazine, the official is freed from having to maintain the blog. For example, today it is quite common for members of the Senate and House to routinely post under their own names on sites like:

- The Hill Blog (<http://blog.thehill.com/>)
- The Huffington Post (<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/>)
- The Daily Kos (<http://www.dailykos.com/>)

However, once a post is made to another blog, the member does lose control of the ability to control the message and the comments made to it in the blogosphere (Pidot, 2006). Also, there is often skepticism in the blogosphere when any famous name appears associated with a post, whether it be “O. J. Simpson” posting about football or “John Kerry” posting about a political issue. In fact, when the real Senator John Kerry posted on the Daily Kos site, Markos Moulitsas, the blog’s originator and administrator, had to post a verification message that the blogger indeed was *the* John Kerry (Terdiman, 2006).

Congress Blogs

According to the Congressional Management Foundation (2005), members of Congress were a bit slow to pick up on blogging. This is due to a variety of factors, including:

- Uncontrolled and unfiltered nature of the medium
- Lack of pressure to engage in blogging (from peers and the public)
- Worries about ceding control of one’s message
- Lack of web savvy/access in districts with poor and/or rural populaces, making blogging and Internet polls less effective ways to communicate with constituents
- Time management and the demanding workload each member already carries (D’Agoistino, 2006; Chapman-Norton, 2005; Terdiman, 2006).

Now, however, skepticism about blogging is turning into curiosity about how this new Web 2.0 tool can be used to communicate with constituents in a unique way. As Terdiman (2006) opined, “Slowly, members of the House of Representatives and the Senate are beginning to appreciate the value of blogs” (n.p.). Representative Mark Kirk (R-IL), an early congressional “blogoneer,” recently declared that blogging “is rapidly going to become the dominant way we talk to our constituents, especially as snail mail dies out” (quoted in Terdiman, 2006, n.p.).

For those in Congress, blogging—as opposed to other forms of communication, which are in many ways costly and ineffective—is also a welcome change. In their report for the Congressional Management Foundation entitled *Communicating with Congress: How Capitol Hill is coping with*

the surge in citizen advocacy, Fitch and Goldschmidt (2005) observed: “Democracy is surely strengthened when citizens have the will and the ability to engage in the policy-making process through easier and more frequent communication with their elected representatives. Clearly, citizens want to be engaged in the democratic process, and members (of Congress) want to hear from, and be responsive to, their constituents.” Yet, their report details that despite a five-fold increase in the volume of e-mails and other communications in the past two decades, congressional offices have no larger staffs than they did four decades ago. And, when faced with reams of electronic and paper messages that are mass generated by various constituency and advocacy groups, quite often the situation becomes overwhelming for congressional members and their staffs, leaving people seemingly out of reach.

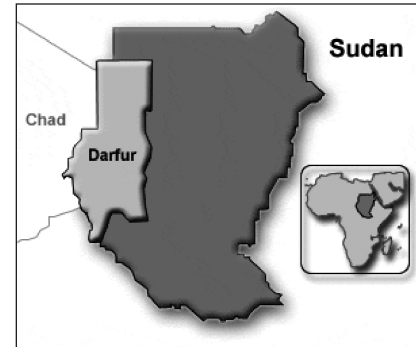
Certainly, a good facilitating step for Congress came in December 2006. The House Administration Committee began offering the House Web Log Utility, which made it easier for congressional offices to offer blogs on their official member websites. The action came at the request of House members to facilitate blogging. The House Administration Committee will make the content of each congressperson’s blog searchable through and indexed on the central House of Representatives’ website <http://www.house.gov> (Rogin, 2006a). The same rules of the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards (the Franking Commission) will apply to blogging as to other forms of media (such as mailings, newsletters, websites, and e-mails), and members will still be allowed to use other blogging software as long as it meets security requirements (Sternstein, 2006).

Table 1 on page 19 lists the 17 members of Congress who have engaged in blogging as of April 2007; Figures 2–5 show some of the best of the congressional blogs.

As can be seen in Table 1, the House is more “blog-enabled” than the Senate. Glover (2006d) commented that perhaps the reason for what he terms “the blog divide” between the House and Senate is “as it should be,” as “the nation’s founders, after all, designed the lower chamber as the one closer to the people” (n.p.). What are the benefits of congressional blogging? From the perspective of

Blogging Sparks an International Incident

The ongoing humanitarian and military crisis in Darfur has rightly attracted vast amounts of media attention. Since 2003, perhaps as many as a quarter of a million people have died and an estimated 2.5 million have been dislocated in this western region of Sudan in an ongoing conflict, which then-Secretary of State Colin Powell declared in September 2004 to be “genocide” (Nelson, 2006).



However tragic and controversial the Darfur crisis has been, it is also noteworthy in that it is the first international incident involving blogs. Jan Pronk had been an outspoken minister in two Dutch governments before being appointed in 2004 as special representative to the Sudan by then-United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Since his appointment, Pronk made several appearances before the U.N. Security Council. He was hailed in the *New York Times* as “a forceful presence” on the conflict in Darfur, as he “characteristically delivers unflinching accounts of the continuing mayhem and political breakdowns in Sudan in a rhetorical style that includes finger-jabbing and dramatic pauses for emphasis” (Hoge, 2006, n.p.). From Khartoum, Pronk also became a forceful presence online. Soon after his arrival in 2004, he began writing a blog, reporting on the conflict with a journalistic and often undiplomatic eye, which made his blog “required reading for everyone watching Sudan’s war-torn western region closely” (Steele, 2006).



Jan Pronk, former U.N. Special Representative to Sudan

Pronk’s blog drew interest not only among journalists and those concerned about the crisis in Darfur, but from those in the halls of power as well. The United Nations and Secretary-General Annan had been concerned about Pronk’s outspokenness. Commenting on the nature of the blog, Stéphane Dujarric, spokesman for the secretary-general, said: “Those views are expressed by Pronk, are his personal views.... There have been a number of discussions with Mr. Pronk regarding his blog and the expectation of all staff members to exercise proper judgment in what they write in their blogs” (quoted in Hoge, 2006, n.p.).

The crisis over Pronk’s blog came to a head in October 2006. Pronk reported on two battles in which the Sudanese army had not fared well. On his blog, he commented on casualties that were heavy, soldiers that refused to fight, and generals that had been replaced. He went on to report information on the movement of troops, material, and equipment, and an attempt by the army to mobilize Arab militias to make up for the loss of troop strength. At that point, the army and the ruling Sudanese government had reached their limit with Pronk. The government in Khartoum moved to expel Pronk over what they perceived to be his over-the-top behavior. Sudanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Ali al-Sadiq cited as justifications for Pronk’s expulsion “the latest statements issued by Mr Pronk on his website regarding severe criticism of the Sudanese Armed Forces and the fact that he said the government of Sudan is not implementing the Darfur peace agreement” (quoted in Steele, 2006, n.p.). Pronk was asked by Annan to return to New York for “consultations,” and he apparently will not be returning to the region.

Victor Tanner of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, who had been in Sudan at the time of the controversy, recounted that Pronk’s blog had indeed sparked an uproar in Sudan. Professor Tanner observed: “Comments on the disarray that seemed to be reigning within the Sudanese armed forces was an amazing thing to see in the blog of a U.N. official. Refreshing but wild. That the armed forces had suffered these losses was something that everybody was talking about as a rumor swarming around Khartoum and Darfur, but it took on a new reality and became ‘the truth’ when it was uttered in print by Pronk” (opinion cited in Hoge, 2006).

Pronk has written an insightful epilogue to this story and on the situation in Darfur. It can be found on his blog at <http://www.janpronk.nl/index120.html>, along with all of his reporting and comments on both his personal tests and the much, much larger regional crisis.

Senator (and now presidential candidate) Barack Obama (D-IL), blogging is quite beneficial. Reflecting on his own blogging experience, Obama believes: "When I reach out to the blog community, it gives me an opportunity to begin a dialogue with an extremely politically sophisticated and active community that I otherwise might not be able to reach. Another benefit of blogging is that, as opposed to delivering a speech, you get immediate and unlimited feedback, both positive and negative" (opinion cited in Terdman, 2006, n.p.).

The Current State of Blogging in Government

Just as in the private sector (as will be discussed in the second part of this report), public officials are finding blogging to be an excellent way to communicate both within their organizations and with their wider constituencies. This is exemplified by the rapid growth of blogs created and maintained by public officials in the United States and abroad. As of April 2007, the following position (or agency-related) blogs have been identified at all levels of government:

- Table 1: Members of Congress
- Table 2: Congressional committees and caucuses
- Table 3: Governors/lieutenant governors
- Table 4: State legislators
- Table 5: Mayors
- Table 6: City managers
- Table 7: Police and fire chiefs
- Table 8: College and university presidents

In addition, more than 100 blogs were identified that were written by local representatives, either by city/county council members or school/other board members. (Anyone interested in obtaining a current listing of these blogs may contact the author directly). Still, as a whole, blogging is in its infancy in taking hold amongst public officials across the American landscape.

Officials are communicating with their constituencies in a variety of ways on their blogs. They are reporting on their activities, expressing their views on issues, chronicling their contacts and travels, and giving glimpses of their personal lives and interests. There are even limited instances of political officials posting podcasts and other media for their constituents to listen to and view on their blogs. In fact, Senator Obama has taken his blog to a second generation, as he now has a podcast page (<http://obama.senate.gov/podcast/>).

Figure 2: Blog of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)



Source: <http://www.speaker.gov/blog/>

Table 1: Blogs of Members of Congress as of April 2007

Congressperson	Date Started	Location
Rep. John Boozman (R-AK)	Jul 2005	http://www.boozman.house.gov/Blog/
Rep. Mike Conaway (R-TX)	Nov 2005	http://www.conawayblog.com/
Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT)	Oct 2005	http://dodd.senate.gov/index.php?q=blog/1
Rep. John T. Doolittle (D-CA)	Jul 2006	http://doolittle.house.gov/blog/
Rep. Katherine Harris (R-FL)	Jan 2005 (ended Jan 2007; left Congress)	http://harris.house.gov/Blog/
Rep. Dennis Hastert (R-IL)	Oct 2005 (ended Jan 2007; left the Speakership)	http://www.speaker.gov/journal/index.shtml
Rep. Jack Kingston (R-GA)	Oct 2005	http://kingston.house.gov/blog/
Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL)	Jan 2005	http://www.house.gov/kirk/blog/
Rep. John Linder (R-GA)	Nov 2005	http://linder.house.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=Blogs.Home
Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-MA)	Dec 2005	http://markey.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=475&Itemid=87
Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL)	Mar 2005	http://obama.senate.gov/blog/
Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ)	Jan 2005	http://www.house.gov/pallone/blog/
Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)	Feb 2007	http://www.speaker.gov/blog/
Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN)	Mar 2004	http://mikepence.house.gov/blog/
Rep. George Radanovich (R-CA)	Feb 2006	http://www.radanovich.house.gov/blog.shtml
Rep. Jan D. Schakowsky (D-IL)	Sep 2005	http://www.janschakowsky.org/SchaBLOGsky/tabid/36/Default.aspx
Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO)	Feb 2005	http://tancredo.house.gov/press/press_blog.shtml

Representative best-in-class blogs from all levels of government are presented in Figures 6–11. These include:

- Figure 6: Blog of Delaware Governor Ruth Ann Minner
- Figure 7: Blog of New Mexico State Senator Dede Feldman (D-Albuquerque)
- Figure 8: Blog of City Manager Dave Ruller of Kent, Ohio
- Figure 9: Blog of Mayor Bill Gentes of Round Lake, Illinois
- Figure 10: Blog of George Esbensen, Fire Chief of Eden Prairie, Minnesota
- Figure 11: Blog of Towson University President Robert Caret

Figure 3: Blog of Representative Mike Conaway (R-TX)

The screenshot shows the header of Mike Conaway's blog. The header features a Texas state flag on the left, the text "U.S. Representative Mike Conaway's BLOG" in the center, and a photo of Mike Conaway on the right. Below the header is the tagline "An open door to the inner workings of your Congressional Office".

The main content area displays a post titled "Air Force Three?" dated February 9th, 2007. The post includes a photo of Mike Conaway speaking at a podium. The text of the post discusses the cost/benefit of the Speaker's request for a military version of the Boeing 757 aircraft, comparing it to the G-5 aircraft used by former Speaker Hastert.

On the right side of the page, there is a sidebar with the following information:

- Providing policymaking insight in our nation's capitol. Updated regularly by Representative Mike Conaway and his staff on the issues Texans care about.
- http://conaway.house.gov
- E-mail Congressman Conaway
- Archives**
 - February 2007
 - January 2007
 - December 2006
 - November 2006
 - October 2006
 - September 2006
 - August 2006
 - July 2006
 - June 2006

Source: <http://www.conawayblog.com/>

Figure 4: Blog of Representative Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ)

The screenshot shows the header of Frank Pallone, Jr.'s blog. The header features a photo of Frank Pallone, Jr. on the left, the text "Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. Representing the People of the Sixth District of New Jersey" in the center, and a photo of a lighthouse on the right. Below the header is a navigation menu with links: Home, Contact Me, Biography, 6th District, Constituent Services, Press, Committees/Leadership, and Legislation.

The main content area displays a post titled "Senate Republican Leaders Wrong to Stifle War Debate" dated 2/7/2007. The post includes a photo of Frank Pallone, Jr. and the text of the post, which discusses the free exchange of ideas and the importance of democratic debate.

On the left side of the page, there is a sidebar with the following information:

- Government Resources
- Federal Funds Express
- Roll Call Votes
- On the House Floor
- New Jersey State Web Sites
- Visit House Democrats.gov
- THOMAS
- Search CURRENT CONGRESS for Bills:

Source: <http://www.house.gov/pallone/blog/>

Figure 5: Blog of Representative John Doolittle (R-CA)

The screenshot shows the header of John Doolittle's blog. The header features a photo of John Doolittle on the left, the text "John T. Doolittle / 4th District of California UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE" in the center, and a collage of photos on the right. Below the header is a navigation menu with links: Biography, District, News, John in the News, Legislation, Issues, Constituent Services, and Kids Page.

The main content area displays a post titled "Border Agents Update" dated February 9th, 2007 by Rep. Doolittle. The post includes a photo of a border agent and the text of the post, which discusses the issue of border security.

On the right side of the page, there is a sidebar with the following information:

- Blogroll**

Source: <http://doolittle.house.gov/blog/>

Table 2: Blogs of Congressional Committees and Caucuses as of April 2007

Committee/Caucus	Date Started	Location
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works; Ranking Member, Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK)	Jan 2007	http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Minority.Blogs
Republican Study Committee; Chairman Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-TX)	Nov 2005	http://www.house.gov/hensarling/rsc/
House Committee on Agriculture Democrats; Ranking Member, Rep. Collin Peterson (D-MN)	Mar 2005 (ended Dec 2006)	http://www.house.gov/agriculture/democrats/blog.shtml

Table 3: Blogs of Governors and Lieutenant Governors as of April 2007

State	Official	Date Started	Location
Connecticut	Lt. Governor Kevin B. Sullivan (D)	Apr 2006	http://kevinsullivan.blogspot.com/
Delaware	Governor Ruth Ann Minner (D)	May 2006	http://www.state.de.us/governor/blog/
Iowa	Governor Chet Culver (D) and Lt. Governor Patty Judge (D)	Apr 2006	http://www.governor.state.ia.us/blog/index.html
Tennessee	Governor Phil Bredesen (D)	May 2005	http://www.tennessee.gov/governor/viewArticleContent.do?id=436
Wisconsin	Governor Jim Doyle (D)	Jan 2005	http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/journal_media.asp

Figure 6: Blog of Delaware Governor Ruth Ann Minner

Delaware Gov > The Governor's Web Site

The blog of
Ruth Ann Minner
Governor, The State of Delaware

December 21, 2006 /4:32 PM
Holiday greetings to our troops
Yesterday, I joined Major General Vavala at the Delaware National Guard Headquarters in Wilmington to deliver a very special gift to some of our guardsmen stationed around the world. Along with many of the deployed soldiers' friends and families, we sent holiday greetings from the First State by phone and video teleconference to our guardsmen serving our country overseas.

December 8, 2006 /10:00 AM
Delaware firsts
On December 7, 1787, Delaware ratified the U.S. Constitution, which earned us the title of "The First State." Throughout history, we have upheld our reputation as the First State by leading efforts that continue to increase the quality of life for all Delawareans. Yesterday

My Profile
o [Biography](#)
o [Photo Gallery](#)
o [Initiatives](#)

Feeds
o [RSS Feed](#)

E-mail Me
o [Contact Form](#)

Source: <http://www.state.de.us/governor/blog/>

Table 4: State Legislators' Blogs as of April 2007 (continued on next page)

State	Legislators with Blogs	Location
Alaska	Rep. John Coghill	http://johncoghill.blogspot.com/
	Rep. Vic Kohring	http://alaskadistrict14.blogspot.com/
	Rep. Bob Lynn	http://www.alaskadistrict31.blogspot.com/
Arkansas	Rep. Steve Harrelson	http://www.steveharrelson.com/blog/
California	Assembly member Loni Hancock	http://lonihancock.blogspot.com/
Colorado	Sen. Dan Grossman	http://dangrossman.net/blog.htm
Connecticut	Sen. Bill Finch	http://www.billfinch.org/blog/
Georgia	Sen. David Adelman	http://www.davidadelman.info/
	Rep. Steve Davis	http://www.steve-davis.org/blog
	Rep. Padro Marin	http://www.marinstatehouse.com/legis_blog/
	Sen. David Shafer	http://www.davidshafer.org/
Hawaii	Sen. Gary L. Hooser	http://garyhooser.livejournal.com/
	Rep. Jon Riki Karamatsu	http://www.livejournal.com/users/jonriki/
Illinois	Rep. Tom Cross	http://www.joincrossblog.com/
	Rep. John Fritchey	http://www.johnfritchey.blogspot.com/
	Sen. Chris Lauzen	http://www.lauzen.com/blog/
	Sen. Dan Rutherford	http://www.danrutherford.org/kind_of_a_blog.asp
Indiana	Rep. Ryan Dvorak	http://www.ryandvorak.com/
	Sen. David Ford	http://senatordavidford.blogspot.com/
	Rep. Steve Heim	http://steveheim.blogspot.com/
Kansas	Rep. Mike Burgess	http://www.mikeburgess.org/blog
	Delegate Sandy Rosenberg	http://delsandy.com/
Maryland	Delegate Richard B. Weldon, Jr.	http://www.thetentacle.com/author.cfm?MyAuthor=23
Minnesota	Rep. Ray Cox	http://raycox.net/index.html
	Rep. Dan Dorman	http://ww3.house.leg.state.mn.us/members/weblog.asp?district=27A&listname=rep_Dan_Dorman_list
	Rep. Denny McNamara	http://ww3.house.leg.state.mn.us/members/weblog.asp?district=57B&listname=rep_Denny_McNamara_list
	Sen. Tom Neuville	http://www.tomneuville.com/
	Rep. Lynn Wardlow	http://ww3.house.leg.state.mn.us/members/weblog.asp?district=38B&listname=rep_lynn_wardlow_list
	Rep. Steve Smith	http://ww3.house.leg.state.mn.us/members/weblog.asp?district=33A&listname=rep_Steve_Smith_list
	Rep. Steve Sviggum	http://ww3.house.leg.state.mn.us/members/weblog.asp?district=28B&listname=rep_Steve_Sviggum_list
	Rep. Lynn Wardlow	http://ww3.house.leg.state.mn.us/members/weblog.asp?district=38B&listname=rep_lynn_wardlow_list

Table 4: State Legislators' Blogs as of April 2007 (continued)

State	Legislators with Blogs	Location
Nebraska	Sen. Philip Erdman	http://www.philiperdman.com/news.html
New Hampshire	Rep. Peter Sullivan	http://representativesullivan.blogspot.com/
New Mexico	Sen. Dede Feldman	http://senatorfeldman.typepad.com/
North Carolina	Rep. Pricey Harrison	http://priceyharrison.blogspot.com/
Ohio	Sen. Marc Dann	http://coinsforchange.typepad.com/
	Sen. Eric D. Fingerhut	http://www.senatorfingerhut.com/site/pp.asp?c=bgKILTOzEoH&b=327285
Oregon	Oregon House Democrats' Blog	http://oregonhousedemocrats.blogs.com/
Pennsylvania	Rep. Mark B. Cohen	http://www.palegislation.blogspot.com/
Tennessee	Rep. Stacey Campfield	http://lastcar.blogspot.com/
	Sen. Roy Herron	http://royherron.blogspot.com/
	Rep. Susan Lynn	http://susan-lynn.blogspot.com/
Texas	Rep. Aaron Peña	http://acapitolblog.blogspot.com/
	Rep. Richard Peña Raymond	http://www.richardraymond.com/pages/mediacentral.htm
Utah	Rep. Jeff Alexander	http://www.jeff-alexander.com/
	Rep. John Dougall	http://jddougall.typepad.com/dynamic_range/
	Rep. Lorie Fowlke	http://www.votelorie.com/default.asp?page=blogs
	Rep. Steve Mascaro	http://www.stevemascaro.com/blog-steve-mascaro.cfm
	Rep. Mike Noel	http://www.mikenoeel.com/blog_index.cfm
	Rep. Steve Urquhart	http://www.steveu.com/
Virginia	Delegates Kristen Amundson and Bob Brink	http://www.7-west.org/
	Delegate Chris Saxman	http://vacostcutting.blogspot.com/
Washington	Sen. Phil Rockefeller	http://www.sdc.wa.gov/2006/rockefellerblog.htm
	Rep. Deb Wallace	http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/wallace/blog.asp
Wisconsin	Rep. Mark Pocan	http://markpocan.blogspot.com/
Wyoming	Rep. Keith Gingery	http://www.planetjh.com/teamblog/BuildWyoming/BuildWyoming.html

Source: Adapted and updated from the National Conference of State Legislatures (2006).

Table 5: Blogs of Mayors as of April 2007

City	Mayor	Date Started	Location
Albuquerque, N.M.	Martin Chavez	Mar 2006	http://www.cabq.gov/blogs/mayor/
Athens, Ala.	Dan Williams	Dec 2006	http://ci.athens.al.us/Mayor/blog.htm
Davie, Fla.	Tom Truex	Feb 2005	http://davie.tv/DavTV/weblog.php
Elburn, Ill.	Jim Willey	Nov 2004	http://www.elburn.il.us/mayorsblog.html
Franklin Township, N.J.	Brian D. Levine	May 2006	http://mayorlevine.livejournal.com/
Oakland, Calif.	Jerry Brown	Apr 2005	http://jerrybrown.typepad.com/ (ended when he became Attorney General of California January 2007)
Parker, Colo.	David Casiano	Apr 2006	http://denver.yourhub.com/Blog.aspx?contentid=76721
Portland, Ore.	Tom Potter	Apr 2006	http://www.portlandonline.com/mayor/index.cfm?c=41986
Reading, Pa.	Tom McMahon	Mar 2005	http://www.readingeagle.com/blog/mayor/
Round Lake, Ill.	Bill Gentes	Jul 2005	http://www.eroundlake.com/blog/
San Francisco, Calif.	Gavin Newsom	Jan 2007	http://www.sfgov.org/site/mayor_index.asp
Somerville, Mass.	Joe Curtatone	Jun 2006	http://blogs.townonline.com/somervilleMayor/
St. Louis, Mo.	Francis G. Slay	Apr 2005	http://www.mayorslay.com/desk/
Valley Center, Kan.	Mike McNown	Mar 2006	http://www.valleycenterks.org/index.asp?NID=212
Washington, D.C.	Anthony Williams	Aug 2005 (term ended Jan 2007)	http://blog.mayor.dc.gov/
Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.	Mary Jo Carson	May 2006	http://www.wisconsinrapidstribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/99999999/WRT0101/60505031&theme=MAYORBLOG&template=theme
Ampthill, United Kingdom (UK)	Penny Foster	May 2006	http://www.ampthill.org.uk/MayorsBlog.htm * Took over the blog from her predecessor, Mark Smith, who blogged from May 2005-May 2006, archived at: http://www.ampthill.org.uk/news.htm
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (UK)	Mary Reid	Jan 2005	http://www.readmyday.co.uk/maryreid
Stockton on Tees (UK)	Suzanne Fletcher	Apr 2006	http://www.stockton.gov.uk/yourcouncil/your_councillors/mayorblog0607/

Table 6: Blogs of City Managers as of April 2007

City	City Manager	Date Started	Location
Chelsea, Mich.	Mike Steklac	May 2005	http://chelseacitymanager.blogspot.com/
Davison, Mich.	Peter Auger	Jun 2005	http://cityofdavisonweblogs.org/html/pauger.html
Eden Prairie, Minn.	Scott Neal	Mar 2003	http://edenprairieweblogs.org/scottneal/
Kent, Ohio	Dave Ruller	Apr 2006	http://kent360.com/
Leesburg, Fla.	Ron Stock	May 2005	http://leesburgflorida.blogspot.com/
Portland, Ore.	Sam Adams	Jun 2005	http://www.commissionersam.com/sam_adams/2006/02/blog_local_hous.html
Prior Lake, Minn.	Frank Boyles	Feb 2006	http://www.cityofpriorlake.com/blog/
Santa Paula, Calif.	Wally Bobkiewicz	Nov 2004	http://www.ci.santa-paula.ca.us/blog/
Sarasota, Fla.	Michael McNees	Aug 2005	http://srqcm.blogspot.com/
West Des Moines, Iowa	Jeff Pomeranz	Feb 2006	http://wdmblog.wdm-ia.com/
Wyoming, Ohio	Robert Harrison	Feb 2006	http://www.wyoming.oh.us/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.viewPage&page_id=26D00E1B-7E90-9BD4-CF018CAF6908A287

Figure 7: Blog of New Mexico State Senator Dede Feldman (D-Albuquerque)

Senator Dede Feldman's Blog

Move to Open Conference Committee is back, Credit Freeze passes Senate now to House, Impeachment Hearing in Senate Public Affairs...

We're Back... for more on Open Conference Committees

Some ideas just don't go away. The move to open legislative conference committees is back—in spite of the narrow defeat of my bill on the Senate floor a week or so ago. The media has really hit this one hard, and some Senators may be regretting their vote against sunshine.

It turns out the Senate Public Affairs Committee had a very similar bill (SB 322), sponsored by Sen. Joe Carraro, a Republican from the West Side, on the table. It was amended to suit several committee members and given a "do-pass" on Thursday, Feb. 22. It will probably hit the Senate floor this week. Call your Senator if you feel that you're entitled to hear about what goes on in these important meetings where the budget and other important matters are hammered out -- often at the last minute. It's Senate Bill 322.

COURTESY OF JHFARR.COM

Today's FotoFeed

(Click for 550x366 px)

RECENT POSTS

Move to Open Conference Committee is back, Credit Freeze passes Senate now to House, Impeachment Hearing in Senate Public Affairs...

Updates and Added Notes

Source: <http://senatorfeldman.typepad.com/>.

Table 7: Police and Fire Department Blogs as of April 2007

City/County	Agency	Date Started	Location
Boston, Mass.	Boston Police Department	Nov 2005	http://bpdnews.com/
Eden Prairie, Minn.	Eden Prairie, Minn. Fire Department (Chief George Esbensen)	Jan 2005	http://edenprairieweblogs.org/georgeesbensen/
Eden Prairie, Minn.	Eden Prairie, Minn. Police Department (Chief Rob Reynolds) Note: Previous Chief Dan Carlson blogged Jun 2004–Dec 2006)	Jun 2004	http://edenprairieweblogs.org/robreynolds/
Los Angeles, Calif.	Los Angeles Fire Department	Dec 2004	http://lafd.blogspot.com/
Los Angeles, Calif.	Los Angeles Police Department	May 2006	http://www.lapdblog.org/
Mangalore, India	Dakshina Kannada Police Department (Supt. Dayananda Bannikal)	Nov 2005	http://www.spdk.blogspot.com/
Miami-Dade County, Fla.	Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department	Mar 2004	http://www.miami-dadefirerescue.com/modules/weblog/index.php?cat_id=2
Northfield, Minn.	Northfield, Minn. Police Department (Chief Gary G. Smith)	Jul 2004	http://garygsmith.net/
North Wales (UK)	Various	Jul 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Constable Richard Brunstrom: http://www.north-wales.police.uk/nwp/public/en/blogs/viewblog.asp?UID=1&CID=131 • Deputy Chief Constable Clive Wolfendale: http://www.north-wales.police.uk/nwp/public/en/blogs/viewblog.asp?UID=2&CID=132 • Assistant Chief Constable Ian Shannon: Read the Assistant Chief Constable's Blog http://www.north-wales.police.uk/nwp/public/en/blogs/viewblog.asp?UID=3&CID=130
Tulsa, Okla.	Tulsa, Okla. Police Department	May 2006	http://www.tulsapolice.org/tpdblog.htm

Table 8: College and University Presidents with Blogs as of April 2007

Institution	President	Location
Arizona State University	President Michael Crow	www.michaelcrow.net
Cedarville University (Iowa)	President Bill Brown	www.xanga.com/billbrown
Colorado College	President Dick Celeste	www.coloradocollege.edu/welcome/presidentsoffice/blog/
Michigan State University	President Lou Anna K. Simon	www.president.msu.edu/blog
Red River College	President Jeff Zabudsky	www.connectrrc.net/president
Towson University	President Robert Caret	http://presidentcaret.org/blog
Trinity University (DC)	President Patricia McGuire	www.trinitydc.edu/about/president/blog
Wenatchee Valley College	President Jim Richardson	www.wvcpresident.blogspot.com/

Figure 8: Blog of Dave Ruller, City Manager of Kent, Ohio

KENT360
many voices, one Kent

Kent City Manager, Dave Ruller

- Home
- City of Kent
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Grocery: The Hunt is On
 FEBRUARY 28, 2007
 Kent State has had great success with its sport teams since adopting the "Hunt is On" slogan, so in that spirit I'm borrowing it to describe our Hunt for new grocery in Kent. Although I've been in the hospital, the development staff have been busy working the phone lines to reach out to grocery prospects. I can't say that we've landed one yet, but the response to the cold calls has ranged from the "click" of the phone being hung up on us, to genuine interest and exchanges of information. Ultimately, it will be up to the plaza property owners to close a deal with a new grocer but we'll try to get as many grocers in front of them as possible.

Figure 9: Blog of Mayor Bill Gentes of Round Lake, Illinois

Blogging Mayor of Round Lake!

SERVING AS THE MAYOR OF ROUND LAKE IS A CONSTANT CHALLENGE. I HOPE YOU ENJOY INTERACTING WITH THIS WEB BLOG. MY E-MAIL ADDRESS IS BGENTES@EROUNDLAKE.COM. PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS WEB BLOG ARE MINE AND MINE ALONE, AND DO NOT REPRESENT OFFICIAL POSITIONS OF THE VILLAGE OF ROUND LAKE.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2007

Baseball Task Force Created

As you may recall I blogged about the possibility of attracting a minor league baseball team to Round Lake awhile ago, complete with a poll! Which had a 78% favorable feeling to it.

I have named Niel Flamm to head the task force, and he has asked me to let you know that the first date for the meeting is March 7 at 6pm at the village hall.

Mayoral Events

- March 3
Run/Walk with the Mayor @ Valley Lakes South
- March 10
Wine Tasting Round Lake Park District Fo... @ Rolek Center
- March 15
Commencement Speech at ITT @ ITT Technical Institute
- March 21
Mayors for Meals @ Round Lake Activity
- April 12
National Conference of Blogging Speech @ Hyatt Regency Chicago

More of [The Mayor's events](#)

PREVIOUS POSTS

Source: <http://www.eroundlake.com/blog/>

Figure 10: Blog of George Esbensen, Fire Chief of Eden Prairie, Minnesota

The Fire Chief's Blog
George Esbensen, Eden Prairie Fire Chief

Blogroll
[Rob Reynolds, Police Chief](#)
[Scott Neal, City Manager](#)

City of Eden Prairie pages
[Fire Department Home](#)

Feeds
 Podcast feed
 Podcast subscription via iTunes
 Weblog headlines via email
 RSS 2.0 Weblog RSS Feed

February 23rd, 2007

CERT members notified, just in case....
By George Esbensen

This afternoon Assistant Chief Kip Springer sent out a notice to all of Eden Prairie's CERT members. Kip is new to his role as the Assistant Chief in charge of Emergency Preparedness and Hazardous Materials, and has a good vision for his new role. Kip's note simply reminded all CERT members to check to make sure their CERT supplies are all present and working. This is a timely reminder as the local weather experts are predicting the possibility of a major snowfall this weekend.

Kip's reminder was this:

"Hello everyone, One of our CERT members mentioned this and I think it is a great idea to pass on to everyone. Based on reports from the national weather service we have the potential for some significant snow accumulation this weekend. This is the perfect time to make sure all of our CERT supplies are up to date and ready for action if needed (Don't forget to check the batteries in your radio's). Remember to plan for your family first and have enough supplies to help limit the amount of traveling you

George Esbensen, Fire Chief

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Source: <http://edenprairieweblogs.org/georgeesbensen/>

Figure 11: Blog of Towson University President Robert Caret

BOB'S BLOG
Direct from Towson University President Robert L. Caret

Snow Days
February 22nd, 2007

Ski hats, mittens, and sleds. Yes. Icy sidewalks, stalled cars, mounds of slush. Yes.

Winter is here, and a snow storm can make life on campus fun or a real challenge. Making the decision to remain open or to close the university is also a challenge and can be as tricky as the weather. At the first snowflake, students wonder if they should start driving to campus or hunker down with a favorite video game. In spite of the input of campus administrators, facilities employees and weather gurus, the decision to open or close is a tough call. And whatever decision we make, we hear about it! "I was already on my way to campus when you announced the closing." "I got here for my class, but my professor didn't!" "Every other college delayed opening but Towson."

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[Welcome](#)

Archives
 February 2007
 December 2006
 November 2006
 October 2006
 September 2006
 May 2006

Source: <http://presidentcaret.org/blog/>

Case Study in Organizational Blogging: STRATCOM

Say 'Yes, Sir' to Blogging

As will be discussed in the second part of this report, organizations are discovering blogs to be an excellent tool to better internal communications and knowledge management. The best governmental example of such organizational blogging is going on in perhaps the most important of all public sector organizations today: the U.S. military. In the Global War on Terror, the U.S. military is learning that information, and specifically information sharing, is a key strategic success factor. The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review states that the military's emphasis is shifting "from an emphasis on ships, guns, tanks, and planes—to focus on information, knowledge, and timely, actionable intelligence" and "from moving the user to the data—to moving data to the user" (Department of Defense, 2006, p. vii). To do so requires "viewing information as an enterprise asset to be shared and as a weapon system to be protected" (Department of Defense, 2006, p. 48).

It is generally acknowledged that in fighting terrorism, the cell—and even individual—nature of the enemy's organization means that the military's bureaucracy can be a great impediment to success in this new world. As Lieutenant General Robert Kehler explained, "Today's terrorist moves at the speed of information" (quoted in Rogin, 2006b, n.p.). Marine Corps General James E. Cartwright, commander of the U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM), recently observed: "The military has a wonderful axiom called the chain of command ... but the chain of information is not the chain of command.... When al Qaeda can outmaneuver you using Yahoo, we've got something wrong here" (quoted in Rogin, 2006c, n.p.).

The military is realizing that its traditional top-down structure, with long decision cycles and one-way flow of information, is not a good fit for today's needs. It is seeking to replace the traditional "push" model of information, where vast amounts of information flow down to the field, inundating commanders with data and consuming precious bandwidth, with a "pull" model, whereby soldiers can search and retrieve the right information they need at the right time (Ratnam, 2006). Thus the military is fast moving to a "networked battlefield" (Katzman, 2005). This is deemed vital today, as reflected in the view of General Lance Smith, commander of the U.S. Joint Forces Command: "We cannot operate against the terrorists until we give our guys out there fighting in the field the same capability, as much information as we can, and the authority to act on that information in real time" (quoted in Rogin, 2006d, n.p.).

STRATCOM is now at the forefront of the military's attempts to revamp to fight the War on Terror in the Information Age. In response to the threat of a rapidly evolving enemy that can sense and decide quickly, STRATCOM is seeking to implement 24-hour, real-time, secure communications from generals to warfighters (Kelly, 2006). The centerpiece of the effort is the Strategic Knowledge Integration (SKI-web). Part of STRATCOM's classified network, SKI-web is nothing less than a 24/7/365 virtual intelligence meeting, with blogging and chat as essential parts of the operation. Blogging is central to Cartwright's efforts to transform the culture and information flow at STRATCOM. Everyone, from generals to frontline warfighters, is encouraged to blog. Lieutenant General Kehler, the deputy commander of STRATCOM, observed that on SKI-web: "We expect and encourage everyone to blog. In fact, you buy



STRATCOM Commander General James Cartwright wants to facilitate open communication within the command, regardless of rank or location, and has put forth the following thesis:

“The metric is what the person has to contribute, not the person’s rank, age, or level of experience. If they have the answer, I want the answer. When I post a question on my blog, I expect the person with the answer to post back. I do not expect the person with the answer to run it through you, your OIC (Officer-in-Charge), the branch chief, the exec, the Division Chief, and then get the garbled answer back before he or she posts it for me. The Napoleonic Code and Netcentric Collaboration cannot exist in the same space and time. It’s YOUR job to make sure I get my answers and then if they get it wrong or they could have got it righter, then you guide them toward a better way ... but do not get in their way” (quoted in Defense Industry Daily, 2005, n.p.).

your way into the blog with the value you add, not the rank you hold. We have a command chain in STRATCOM, not an information chain, an infosphere, if you will, within which command is exercised” (Rogin, 2006e, n.p.). Inside STRATCOM, the non-hierarchical, free flow of information in blogs is proving to be nothing less than “an enormous cultural change” (Kelly, 2006).

While it is still early to report on the success of STRATCOM’s transformation, there are signs that it is paying off. One anonymous officer at the command reported:

I am currently assigned to USSTRATCOM. I can tell you from personal experience that the current 4-star leadership exercises the blogging system with maximum efficiency. If the generals below him get caught by surprise w/ something their underlings have posted, it’s because they weren’t checking the blog themselves—and that’s what the 4 star expects. Everyone, from the lowest ranking person all the way to the 4 star, shares in the information realm and is free to post information. Information is perishable, and the only way to avoid bureaucracy is by streamlining the delivery method (quoted in Kelly, 2006, n.p.).

A Guide for Public Sector Bloggers

Overview

Gallo (2004) aptly predicted that the blog revolution is “more a prolonged infiltration than a sudden overthrow” (n.p.). However, in time, blogs may well become, as AOL Vice President Bill Schreiner described them, an “oral history” for our times (eMarketer, 2005a). Now, with the increasing frequency of not just words (both in text and audio files), but video posts as well, blogs may become a multimedia history book.

Still, there will be fits and starts. Witness what has occurred in the state of Tennessee. Bill Hobbs, a blog consultant, started a website called VolPols (<http://www.volpols.com/>), which he envisioned as a portal for all members of the Tennessee House and Senate and heads of state agencies to have their own blogs to foster better communications. He offered state officials both free blog hosting and even his personal blog consulting. In the end, his idea, which Glover (2006e) terms a “good model” for the 50 states, has drawn only two legislative bloggers (Representative Stacey Campfield and Senator Roy Herron). Hobbs’ last post on the blog states that he is considering revamping the concept.

The Los Angeles Police Department started a blog (<http://www.lapdblog.org/>), spearheaded by Police Chief William J. Bratton in May 2006. Inspired by the success of the Los Angeles Fire Department’s blog (<http://lafdblogspot.com/>), Bratton sees the police blog as the centerpiece of the department’s web strategy, with the ultimate goal of having “the role of law enforcement officials to evolve from distance protectors and rapid responders to true partners and conduits for meaningful social change” (quoted in Glaister, 2006, n.p.). While Bratton does post on the site and uses it to host podcasts of his press conferences, the site is known for honest reporting on the city’s crime, much of it by Lieutenant Ruben de la Torre, who has earned a reputation for his “Dragnet-style” prose (Glaister, 2006).

What’s coming? There are certainly indications that public officials are experimenting to “push the virtual envelope” in the era of Web 2.0 (see the sidebar “A Second Life for Politicians?” on page 32). Take for instance Texas State Representative Richard Peña Raymond (D-Laredo). A veteran political blogger, Raymond has maintained his blog (<http://www.acapitolblog.com/>) since January 2005. In February



No Computer Skills Required

Texas State Representative Aaron Peña (D-Hidalgo) is a “blogoneer” in the Lone Star State, the first Texas state legislator to maintain a blog. In fact, he actually has two blogs:

<http://www.acapitolblog.com/> (focused on Texas and local issues)

<http://aaronpenasquixote.blogspot.com/> (focused on national issues)

Representative Peña has been called upon to speak to his fellow Texas legislators and other interested audiences on his blogging activities, even though he admits that his own knowledge of computers and the Internet is poor. His advice to his fellow lawmakers: It takes discipline and dedication to maintain a blog (Glover, 2006f).

2007, Raymond, who represents a district with a heavily Hispanic populace, announced that he would add a new bilingual video blog to his online site. He hopes that the video blog (using videos which he has made and posted to YouTube) will keep constituents and the media informed on issues and bills before the legislature. He also sees the video

blog as a useful tool to reach out and involve younger citizens of all backgrounds in government. Raymond (2007) stated: "Technology has given us an opportunity to keep our constituents more fully informed on the important issues facing our state. With this new tool, I hope to bring more insight into the legislative process, and make it easier to stay

A Second Life for Politicians?

Beyond the technological horizon we see today will undoubtedly be new Web 2.0 frontiers for public organizations, and public sector officials will need to stay abreast of these developments. Take the burgeoning Second Life phenomenon. Created and run by San Francisco's Linden Lab, Second Life (<http://www.secondlife.com/>) is a 3-D digital universe where individuals—over 3.3 million as of February 2007—take on virtual identities, or "avatars" (Mesure, 2007). According to Linden (2006), there are now 50,000 premium residents (virtual landowners) who each month spend approximately 7 million hours "in-world"; over half of these "virtual residents" are from outside the United States.

How big is Second Life? Already leading corporations, including American Apparel, Dell, Nike, Starwood Hotels, Sony, and Toyota, are staking out a presence in this virtual environment (Jana, 2006; Mesure, 2007). Late last year, IBM even held a "town hall" meeting of its employees in Second Life, led by the firm's CEO, Sam Palmisano and his avatar (LaMonica, 2006). Likewise, more than 70 colleges and universities, including UCLA, have built virtual campuses and hold classes in Second Life (Olsen, 2007).



Now government is entering the world of Second Life. Former Virginia Governor Mark Warner was the first politico to enter Second Life (Gross, 2007). Representative George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, has initiated the virtual House of Representatives in Second Life. Working in conjunction with his friends, filmmaker George Lucas and John Gage, chief of research for Sun Microsystems, along with the Internet marketer ClearInk, the virtual House came about after two weeks of work. Representative Miller recently recounted: "Nancy [House Speaker Nancy Pelosi] made me explain Second Life to the [Democratic House] leadership, and they kept looking

at me with that look of, 'What are you talking about?' " (Vorderbrueggen, 2007, n.p.) In Second Life, the virtual House stands next to a virtual version of the Washington Monument and other D.C. landmarks. In an almost surreal twist, streaming video from the "first life" House routinely appears in the Second Life version, along with avatars of members of Congress (Gross, 2007).

Nancy Scola of the George Washington University Institute for Politics, Democracy, and the Internet termed Second Life "a good place for politicians to connect with a new group of voters" (quoted in Grove, 2007, n.p.). Representative Miller, who hopes bipartisanship will come to Second Life with the addition of Republican participants, recommends that other members of Congress take advantage of the virtual House, believing that the virtual world "is a very different forum for a member of Congress, [but] it's also very exciting, because it gives us an opportunity to interact with people that are interested in what's taking place in the United States and the Congress" (quoted in Gross, 2007, n.p.).

The United States is not alone in having politics and government spill into Second Life. Several members of the Dutch Parliament virtually traveled there to meet with their online constituents (a video of their visit can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kqod_Fyyot0) (McCullagh, 2007).

As social networking and blogging evolve into new realms, both in the real Internet world and in the virtual environment, assessments will need to be made as to how to most effectively navigate in both worlds. Analysts and researchers will likewise have to develop means to assess and research the activities of both corporate and public sector organizations, officials, and/or candidates in Second Life and rival virtual communities. One could well imagine a future where in addition to websites and blogs, many public officials and candidates may well "go virtual" and enter Second Life.

informed even if you are hundreds of miles away from the Capitol” (n.p.). Raymond’s video blog can be viewed at <http://www.richardraymond.com/pages/mediacentral.htm>.

But before you go to the advanced class of bilingual podcasts or engage in a debate on Second Life, you must master the fundamentals of blogging. Thus, in the next sections of the report, we outline how to start blogging, discuss the lessons learned by early public sector bloggers, and present 10 tips for government bloggers.

How Do I Blog?

Let’s say that you make the decision to start blogging. What do you need to do? What do you need to know? Well, the long and short of it is, not much. By using the widely available blogging software and hosting services (discussed in the second part of this report) or blog options offered as part of other software/web hosting packages, all you basically have to do is make a series of decisions regarding the basic format and structure of your blog. It begins with naming the blog, and then progresses to items such as the screen layout, archiving options, and whether to allow comments or not. This final item is particularly important, because comments provide the opportunity for readers to provide feedback to the blogger.

The present generation of blogging software is quite sophisticated and yet remarkably user-friendly, allowing you to have a quite professional-looking blog in an hour or so—at little or no cost. Today’s blogware gives you the ability to easily create links between your blog postings and items anywhere on the web. Say, for example, you want to reference your state (i.e., Louisiana) or city (i.e., New Orleans) items in your blog. The software can help you to link to encyclopedia entries on the subjects (like Wikipedia’s entries on those items) or to their official websites. The software also generally enables you to create permalinks that other bloggers can use to link back to a specific post on your blog, not simply the front page. In this way, if a blogger is referencing a specific post you made in May 2006, the reader will be led directly there. The TrackBack feature on blogs allows a blogger to see who has seen his or her original post and has written another entry concerning it. The system works by sending a “ping” between the blogs, providing the alert. Thus, you will automatically

know when someone is writing about your blog. Finally, you can elect to provide blog readers with the option to subscribe to your blog using RSS (Really Simple Syndication) or Atom feeds. By providing a link on your site, readers can then be provided with the content of your blog whenever it is updated. Through the use of feed “readers” or “aggregators” that work with RSS or Atom, individuals can subscribe to all their favorite sites and view all new updates on these sites through the reader, without having to go to each site.

As you become more experienced and comfortable with the technology, you may want to consider whether to include audio podcasts or video links in your blog. In the following sections, we examine the lessons learned from early public sector bloggers and then present 10 tips for public sector executives to follow in their blogging activities.

Lessons Learned from—and in—the Blogosphere

One of the key lessons to be learned from this survey of blogging in the public sector is that it does take dedication and a bit of bravery to take that first step into Web 2.0 and join the conversation in the blogosphere. The leader role today is quite different from what it was just a few years ago, and the need to engage in new media is a part of it. Thus, as blogging becomes more and more common amongst public officials, there will be both peer and public pressure to join in. As D. Michael Lindsay of Rice University bluntly put it: “Leaders have to spin many more plates today than they had to 20 or 30 years ago. That’s just the nature in which society grows and develops. As it grows and develops, you have more people to satisfy, more demands on your time, more expectations. It seems that those kinds of elements never go away, they just increase” (quoted in Anonymous, 2007, n.p.).

The principal recommendation of this researcher is simply a refrain of the classic Nike marketing slogan “*just do it!*”TM—if you think you have what it takes to make it in the blogosphere. Take the advice of Bill Gentes, the so-called “Blogging Mayor of Round Lake” in Illinois. Gentes has blogged for over two years, and his comments for his fellow public officials are insightful:

I know of a few mayors who blog regularly, and by regularly I mean three times a week.

Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (S. 2590) requires the U.S. Office of Management and Budget to oversee a new website through which the public can easily access information about grants and contracts awarded by federal departments and agencies, except those classified for national security reasons.

The bill was introduced by Senators Tom Coburn and Barack Obama on April 6, 2006. Sometime after August 2, 2006, Senators Ted Stevens and Robert Byrd placed “secret holds” on S. 2590, which under Senate rules prevents a vote on this act or its amendments. On August 17, 2006, Senator Coburn identified Senator Stevens as “the only senator blocking [the bill]” at a town hall meeting in Arkansas, but this did not become widely known for nearly two weeks.

Prompted by political blogs, various individuals contacted their senators to determine if they placed the “secret hold” on S. 2590. The effort was an unusual example of bipartisan collaboration on the Internet, with the right-leaning blogs Porkbusters and GOPProgress actively working with left-leaning TPMuckraker. On August 30, 2006, after he had been identified as the only suspect by Porkbusters and one of two suspects by TPMuckraker, a spokesman for Senator Stevens confirmed that he placed a hold. The following day, Senator Byrd (TPMuckraker’s other suspect) also admitted to placing a hold, stating that he had wanted to have more time to look at the legislation; he had lifted the hold by the time of the announcement. Senator Stevens subsequently lifted his hold as well.

The bill passed unanimously in the Senate on September 7, 2006, and was passed in the House on September 13, 2006. President Bush signed the bill into law on September 26, 2006, explaining: “This bill is going to create a website that will list the federal government’s grants and contracts. It’s going to be a website that the average citizen can access and use. It will allow Americans to log onto the Internet just to see how your money is being spent. This bill will increase accountability and reduce incentives for wasteful spending. I am proud to sign it into law and I am proud to be with members of both political parties who worked hard to get this bill to my desk.”

Source: “A Conversation with Rob Portman,” *The Business of Government*, Spring 2007.

I know of no one as crazy as me to do it every single day. The comments are hysterical, you have to live here to get some of it, but I allow uncensored comments so I get the negatives, positives, and the inane! It is the single smartest thing I have ever done as Mayor; it allows me to control the dialog, it gives me the ability to answer my 18,000 residents’ questions in depth, and gives me a way of going over the top of every naysayer and right to the general public (quoted in Swope, 2007, n.p.).

It is highly important that once you engage in blogging, you continue to do so on a regular basis. Simply put, if you do not post regularly—at least two to three times per week—then you do not give people a reason to visit your blog. Also, if you choose to discontinue your blog, you may face scorn both in cyberspace and in the real world. Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen launched his “Philblog” in May 2005 at (<http://www.tennesseeanytime.org/governor/viewArticleContent.do?id=519&page=0>). In his first post, Bredesen observed:

“The relative informality and immediacy that makes blogs interesting are at odds with the circumspection and care that a responsible office requires and without which you get your feet tangled up real quick. I’m going to try it for a while, but if it is dull or if the political cost is too great, I may need to close up shop at some point in the future. It is really worth giving it a try, though.” While he was quite surprised at the media attention and the audience it reached, he ended—or, more accurately, abandoned—the blog after just five entries. Now, the blog remains on his main website, a reminder of an effort tried but not successful.

When serving as mayor of Washington, D.C., in 2005, Anthony Williams launched a short-lived blog. He was criticized for the infrequency of updates (going a week or more between posts) and for the shrill tone of his responses. In fact, when one citizen commented on the blog about the person who wrote that all city employees were “idiots,” Mayor Williams responded: “Well, that’s not very helpful. I can’t help you if you say the whole city is going to hell in a handbasket” (quoted in Weiss, 2005, n.p.).

Lessons Learned from the Superintendent Blogger

Clayton Wilcox is the superintendent of schools in Pinellas County, Florida. The *St. Petersburg Times* offered the superintendent an opportunity to have a blog on the paper's website, just as they offered other schools in the area. The blog, dubbed *The Classroom*, was initiated in March 2005. One of Wilcox's posts elicited over 800 comments (Baker, 2005). The blog allowed Superintendent Wilcox the chance to present his views on a wide variety of educational matters and district affairs, as well as commenting on controversial subjects, such as the Florida district's continuing desegregation case and the well-publicized instance when police were called to a school to deal with an unruly 5-year-old student, who was seen being handcuffed on a videotape shown on news broadcasts (Colgan, 2005).

Unfortunately, Superintendent Wilcox ended his first blog on May, 18, 2006, with the following entry:

I will talk with the *Times* tomorrow about ending my blog—I think that talking face to face with teachers will be more productive going forward.

I imagine this will be my last post ... I will try to achive [sp.] the posts received up to this date ... some will say that I wimped out ... I will just say this ... the lies, distortions and mean spiritedness of some—was not worth my time or worthy of this district ... good night and good luck.

—Clayton

While one anonymous commenter called the end of his blog “a damn shame, but it was coming,” another accused the superintendent of “taking my ball and going home,” while yet another added the famous Jack Nicholson line from *A Few Good Men*, “You can't handle the truth!”

In the end, Wilcox, who had been asked to appear on panels for educators based on his reputation as the “Blogging Superintendent,” believed that the blog was an effective tool, for a while. However, the “lack of civility” of a few anonymous commenters who came to dominate the blog ruined it, and the forum “became ugly and ‘like a cancer’ on the district” (quoted in Tobin, 2006, n.p.).

After summer vacation, *The Classroom* was revived in August 2006, but with new rules. The blog, now shared by Superintendent Wilcox and other top district administrators, restricted comments to registered participants only and did not allow the anonymous comments that had proved so troublesome in the past. Additionally, a comment policy was added:

Comment Policy (from *The Classroom* blog website)

Please be sure your comments are appropriate before submitting them. Inappropriate comments include content that:

- Is defamatory or libelous
- Is abusive, harassing, or threatening
- Is obscene, vulgar, or profane
- Is racially, ethnically, or religiously offensive
- Is illegal or encourages criminal acts
- Is known to be inaccurate or contains a false attribution
- Infringes copyrights, trademarks, publicity, or any other rights of others
- Impersonates anyone (actual or fictitious)
- Is off-topic or spam
- Solicits funds, goods or services, or advertises

The Classroom can be viewed at <http://blogs.tampabay.com/classroom/>.

You must make your blog your own. In fact, Christopher Barger, IBM's lead consultant for blogging and podcasting communications, asserts, "The first thing we tell execs is they've got to be authentic" (op. cited in Fitzgerald, 2006, n.p.). You must be the author of your posts—not your staff, not your secretary or administrative assistant, and certainly not your campaign manager or consultant. Steve Hayden is vice chairman of advertising giant Ogilvy & Mather, which is now advising its corporate clients on blogging. He recently remarked: "If you fudge or lie on a blog, you are biting the karmic weenie. The negative reaction will be so great that, whatever your intention was, it will be overwhelmed and crushed like a bug. You're fighting with very powerful forces because it's real people's opinions" (opinion cited in Graves, 2006, p. 12).

It is also important that, as a public official, your blog is yours. Take California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. His office has established the governor's blog at <http://gov.ca.gov/blog>. The blog is not "technically" a blog, as no comments are allowed. Thus, it functions more as a glorified press release venue or political mouthpiece. More importantly, however, while a number of state agency heads and other California officials post fairly regularly on the blog, the governor has done so only once. Likewise, the governor's wife, Maria Shriver also has a blog, located at <http://www.firstlady.ca.gov/blog>. She has yet to post to her own blog.

As Mike Cornfield, a professor at George Washington University, bluntly put it, "without comments, a blog is 'just a glorified press release' " (quoted in Terdeman, 2006, n.p.). To prevent this, elected officials need to find ways to allow comments on their blogs. While allowing unmoderated and unfiltered comments is a brave step, it can also be an unwise one (witness the experience of a school superintendent chronicled in the sidebar—"Lessons Learned from the Superintendent Blogger"). Registration, moderation, comment policies (and Superintendent Wilcox's is a good model), and the use of CAPTCHA technology are becoming the modus operandi for blogging executives today, in both the private and public sectors. If they can find a way to incorporate comments on their blogs, officials will get more out of the experience, and so will their readers. As Chapman-Norton (2005) pinpointed, "blogs—real blogs—have potential."

Public officials can certainly take lessons from the experience of Sarasota (Florida) City Manager Michael McNees. In August 2005, McNees landed in political hot water for a controversial land deal and a 500,000-gallon sewage spill. In fact, the Sarasota City Commission only retained him by a vote of 3 to 2 (Lewis, 2005). The city manager had come under fire for both his management style and his communication skills (Saewitz, 2006a). Ironically, that same month, he started the Sarasota City Manager's Blog, located at <http://srqcm.blogspot.com>. Since that time, McNees, the only blogging city manager in Florida, has regularly posted to his blog. He has continually allowed for moderated comments on the site, and regularly draws numerous comments from citizen readers and city employees. In fact, commenters have told him, "Thanks so much for opening a line of communication," and "Mike, this is turning out to be quite a town meeting." In June 2006, he was presented the "Courage in Communication" award from the Florida City and County Management Association for his "blogoneering" work (Saewitz, 2006b).

In the public sector environment, blogging executives have to be particularly careful in the messages they convey, both to internal audiences and to their external constituencies (see the sidebar "Think Before You Blog," for a story about a blogging city council person in Texas).

Dr. Philip Windley, an associate professor of computer science at Brigham Young University, served as the chief information officer for the state of Utah in 2001–2002. Recently, Professor Windley recounted to *CIO Magazine* two cautionary tales from his tenure as Utah's CIO, when he became one of the first public officials in the country to start blogging as a way to improve communications with his staff. Windley found that when he made a blog entry expressing his interest in enterprise instant messaging, some members of his staff interpreted the post "as a directive to begin deploying the technology, rather than an invitation to discuss the idea" (quoted in Fitzgerald, 2006, n.p.).

His second tale relates to how miscommunications can occur in blogging, damaging both morale in an agency and individual careers. Windley had encouraged his staff members to blog, and when an e-mail outage occurred, the manager in charge used his blog to explain why, from a technical perspective,

Think Before You Blog

Let's file this one under the heading of "what not to do" as a blogging public official anywhere, at any level, at any time. Kathy Garcia Moffett was the mayor pro tem of the Dallas suburb of Balch Springs, Texas (population of approximately 20,000) until some folks in town read what she had posted on her blog on her MySpace page. Moffett had posted on various topics, including entries praising the community's police department. However, at 2:03 a.m. on January 16, 2007, Moffett made a blog entry of approximately 600 words in which she launched into a tirade against the city's police, naming three officers in an entry filled with expletives. Mayor Pro Tem Moffett's posting is excerpted below:

2:03 a.m. "I have been behind the police department and the officers for so [expletive] long!! ... I am so [expletive] tired of hearing this [expletive] about the pay!! The whole city knows that you guys need raises!!!!"

Mayor Pro Tem Moffett went on to criticize the three officers personally, even adding that for two of the officers, "I hope somebody knocks you on your [expletive] and you fall hard. "

Moffett issued a *mea culpa* post two days later (shown below), and she removed the initial post from her blog as well.

"It has come to my attention that I have upset some people with one of my previous blogs. I take that as my cue to make a public apology to the names that I have mentioned in that blog! ... It was just frustration and venting on my part, nothing more!! I will remove that blog and refrain from making comments about you three and any negative comments about the Police Department. This is being done of my own free will. Nobody has asked me or told me to write this!!

Once again I am truley [sic] sorry and I hope that you will and can accept my apology!!"

However, the words launched in cyberspace had crossed over to the real world of politics, and the damage was done. At its February meeting (which Moffett did not attend), Balch Springs City Council heard from a variety of officials and constituents, including upset representatives of the police department. The city attorney voiced his concerns to the council about potential city liability springing from her comments. The council voted to remove Moffett from her mayor pro tem duties, and it then issued an official apology to the citizens and the police force for her online rant. The council stopped short of removing Moffett from office, but only because they were prohibited from doing so by the city's charter. In the words of council member Linda Pineda, "I am very sorry that we cannot force Ms. Moffett to resign" (quoted in Anderson, 2007, n.p.). Moffett has now indicated that she will not run for re-election to her council position.

Balch Springs Mayor Wayne Middleton gave sage advice for any public official who might go "off" on their blog, "If she's going to vent, she should have vented to somebody somewhere out in the middle of nowhere, so it would go nowhere" (quoted in Anderson, 2007, n.p.).

So, while there is a need for openness and honesty in blogging, you might rethink what you post in anger, especially at 2 a.m.

the service disruption had happened. While the manager was factual in his explanation, the revelation damaged his relationship with the IT staff he oversaw and lowered morale in the unit. Ultimately, the manager chose to depart his position in the aftermath of the revelations he made in his blog. From Windley's perspective, this story highlights the fact that "it's important to say why you're blogging in each of your posts, and to try not to say things that might generate calls from reporters" (quoted in Fitzgerald, 2006, n.p.).

Finally, whatever blog strategy a public official may choose, even if it is *not* to blog, one thing is essential today: to monitor the blogosphere for what is being said about you, your agency, your area, and so on. As will be discussed in relation to the corporate realm later in this report, such monitoring is essential for protecting companies and their brands. Today, it is essential in the public sector as well. This is made crystal clear by the "boulevard of broken dreams" made up of prominent public officials and members of the media who have either lost stature and/or their positions due to stories that

have originated in the blogosphere and crossed over to the mainstream media. Such prominent cases that have involved politicians and members of the media include:

- **Senator Trent Lott (R-MS):** for remarks made that seemingly approved of racial segregation when he praised Senator Strom Thurmond's 1948 presidential campaign at a birthday party for the octogenarian) (Scott, 2004)
- **Senator George Allen (R-VA):** for calling a 20-year-old volunteer for his Democratic opponent, James Webb, "macaca" (a term considered insensitive and demeaning) (Craig and Shear, 2006).
- **Dan Rather, former anchor of the CBS Evening News:** for his *60 Minutes II* story on President George W. Bush's Texas National Guard service, which was based on memos called into serious question by bloggers (Butterworth, 2006).
- **Eason Jordan, Chief News Executive for CNN:** for the off-the-record remarks he made at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in 2005 in which he claimed that U.S. troops had intentionally killed—"targeted"—journalists in Iraq (Johnson, 2005).
- **Democratic Presidential Candidate and former North Carolina Senator John Edwards:** was criticized in February 2007 when two bloggers on his campaign staff came under fire for postings they made on other blogs that were perceived to be anti-Catholic and insensitive, and for their prior, pre-employment posting on blogs relating to the Duke University lacrosse rape case (Snow, 2007).

In fact, in political circles, this new Web 2.0 fear has even inspired a new verb, to be "George Allen-ed," and a warning from Senator John Ensign (R-NV), chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee: "You have to assume there is a recording device of some kind on you at all times—that is what I am telling all of my people" (quoted in Budoff, 2007, n.p.).

10 Tips for Blogging by Public Sector Executives

Based on an analysis of the best practices and advice for public officials, as well as private sector executives, here is a brief "cheat sheet" of tips for entering the blogosphere.

Tip 1: Define yourself and your purpose. In 1992, Ross Perot's running mate was Vice Admiral James Stockdale, a Vietnam War hero and former prisoner of war. At the vice presidential debate, he infamously began with the rhetorical questions: "Who am I? Why am I here?" (Holmes, 2005). While these questions didn't lead to victory for Stockdale, they can for you. You should, at least mentally but perhaps in your first post, state the reasons you are starting your blog, what you hope to do with it, who you hope will read it, and so on.

Tip 2: Do it yourself! Do not have someone else write your blog. While you may enlist assistance for any technical aspects that you feel uncomfortable with (and with the blogging tools available today, this really should not be an issue), you must be the author to make it authentic and interesting to your audience.

Tip 3: Make a time commitment. Before you begin your blog, know that you must make a personal commitment to have the time available to not only regularly post to your blog, but to read and respond to comments made on it. And if the comment section is managed, you or perhaps a subordinate must make decisions on which comments will be posted on the blog and which will not. You should work blog writing and reading time into your regular schedule, and if you know you will be unavailable for a period of time, invite a guest blogger(s) to fill your virtual shoes. Remember, in the blogosphere, 10 days without posts could mean the death of your blog, as readers will be drawn elsewhere in virtual space.

Tip 4: Be regular. While related to the first two tips, the need to regularly post to your blog merits particular attention. In short, if you do not regularly post updated material to your blog—*interesting material*—whatever readership you have will quickly fade away.

Tip 5: Be generous. If your blog is nothing but an exercise in self-centeredness and self-congratulation (or links to organizations congratulating you), then your readership will tire of it. Use your blog as a platform for your jurisdiction, your staff, your family (to an extent), and so on. Take the opportunity to highlight special people in your district or community, and let your blog be a channel for spotlighting your area, not just yourself. Provide praise, applaud unsung heroes, and point out people in need of special help. In short, do good works with your words.

Tip 6: Have a “hard hide.” You cannot have a thin skin and engage in blogging. You will receive comments that range from the thoughtful and insightful to the unwarranted and the unprintable. You will also surely be praised by some tech-savvy constituents for using a new communications medium, while others will call your office or write a “snail mail” letter to ask what’s wrong with the more established forms of communication.

Tip 7: Spell-check. This almost goes without saying, but it is surprising how many blog posts have spelling and/or grammatical errors. When spotted, such mistakes can generate satirical comments, spawn bad publicity in traditional and non-traditional media, and detract from your message. As the saying goes, “That’s why God made a spell-checker!”

Tip 8: Don’t give too much information. While it is great to be honest and open in your blog, you can do it to the extreme. Let the blog be a window into your thoughts, your work, and your travels, but remember the blunt admonition of the anonymous (2003) author of *The Blogger Manifesto*, “Nobody gives a [expletive] about what you had for breakfast” (n.p.).

Tip 9: Consider multimedia. While you must concentrate on providing timely updates to your blog, making them interesting and well written, having good content is not enough. It is crucial that you have an easy-to-navigate, visually appealing layout to your blog. In today’s environment, there is a ratcheting up of blog standards, and in a short time it will be almost expected that video and audio elements be included on blogs. While you must learn to walk before your run, you should seek out links to audio/video sources to go multimedia at no cost. Then you can begin to consider recording and producing your own audio/video content to offer as posts or podcasts on your blog.

Tip 10: Be a student of blogging. You should make it a regular habit to spend time each day being exposed to blogs other than your own. Find favorite blogs (political and non-political) and subscribe to them using a news reader or aggregator program (using RSS or Atom feeds). With these tools, you can view updates from your favorites in one place, without having to surf to multiple sites. Finally, check out the top-ranked blogs (according to Technorati or ComScore), and use this as an opportunity to benchmark the best of the best.

A Final Thought on Public Sector Blogging

One final thought: What a wonderful country we live in that has brought us tools and forums such as blogs, MySpace, YouTube, and Second Life. Recently deceased columnist and political commentator Molly Ivins, a native Texan (like the author of this report), once observed: “The thing about democracy, beloveds, is that it is not neat, orderly, or quiet. It requires a certain relish for confusion” (quoted in Lewis, 2007, n.p.). These new media, which are really new ways of living and existing, are not, by any means, “neat, orderly, or quiet.” But in them lies the great potential and the very real prospect that these Web 2.0 tools can, over time, increase civic engagement and serve to strengthen our democracy for the 21st century. Inevitably, the march of real progress and hype will continue and accelerate, as already, the New York Times and leading firms (such as IBM) have begun speaking of Web 3.0 (Markoff, 2006). This certainly points to the need for discussions and research on how Web 2, 3, 4, and beyond will impact the republic.

Matthew Taylor, who until recently had been British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s chief political strategist, believes that the web can be “fantastic” for democracy. However, he also believes that the often shrill political discourse found on the Internet could be problematic, perhaps even approaching a “crisis.” He observed: “At a time at which we need a richer relationship between politicians and citizens than we have ever had to confront the shared challenges we face, arguably we have a more impoverished relationship between politicians and citizens than we have ever had” (quoted in Wheeler, 2006, n.p.). In addition, Tim Berners-Lee recently expressed concern that the web can be used today to “spread misinformation and undemocratic forces” (cited in Ghosh, 2006, n.p.).

Noted *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan (2006) commented that one result of the new media is that there are “more points of view, more subjects discussed, more data presented.” According to Noonan, “This, in a great republic, a great democracy, a leader of the world in a dangerous time, is not bad but good” (n.p.). Clearly, the tools and forums of the Internet can help to advance a government truly “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

Part II: Blogging as a Social Phenomenon

The Rise of User-Generated Media

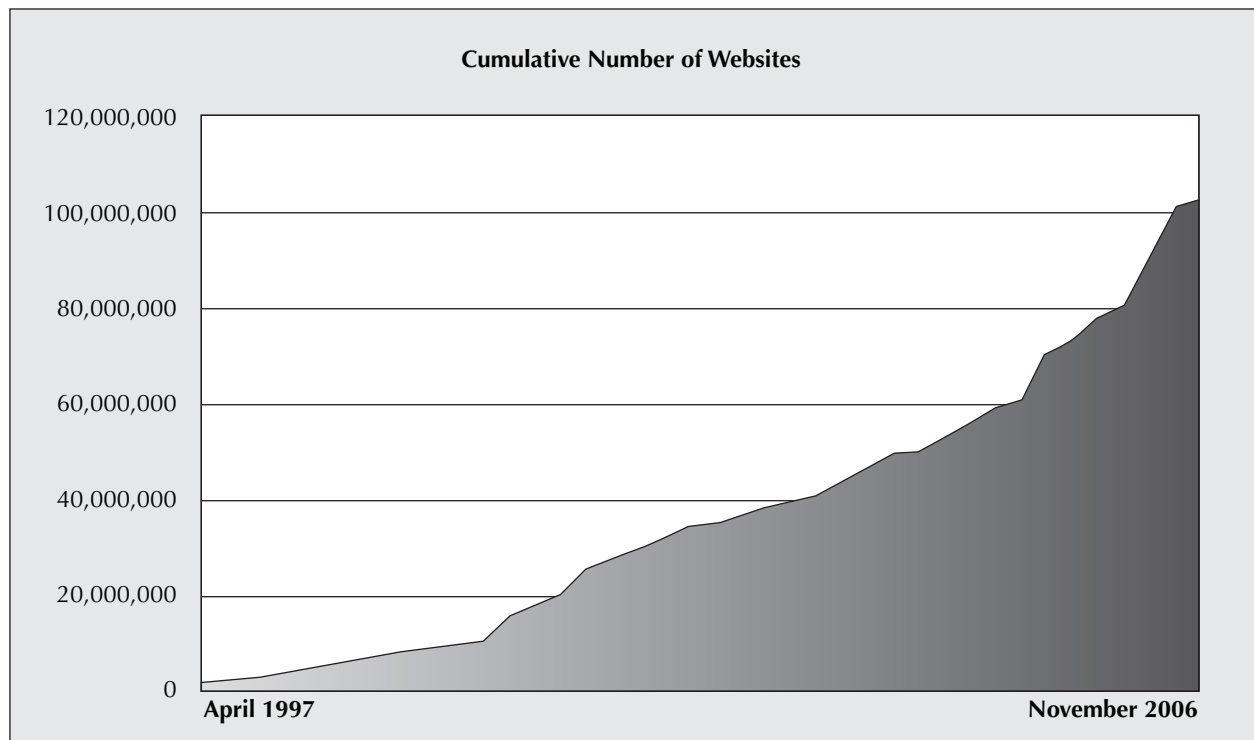
A Second Generation of the Internet

Writing in *Public Opinion Quarterly* in 2003, Jennings and Zeitner observed that any attempt to assess the impact of the Internet on the American public and public life in America “involves shooting at a moving target” (p. 311). Thus, it is worth noting that we quietly (and collectively) passed an amazing milestone sometime in October 2006, when some anonymous someone created the 100 millionth website. As can be seen in Figure 12, the past decade has seen explosive growth in the size of the web. According to the most recent research

available from Nielsen//NetRatings, as of late 2006, 158 million Americans accessed the Internet in an average month, spending an average of just over 26 hours per month online (Cassar, 2007).

In the beginning of the web, there was Metcalfe’s Law, which states that the value of a network grows as additional users are added. The classic example of such a “network effect” is the fax machine, where one fax machine by itself is useless, with no partner fax with which to communicate. However, as more faxes are added to the network, the more communications that can take place. Thus, not only does the

Figure 12: The Growth of the Web



Source: Walton (2006).

network grow, but the value and utility of it does as well, roughly at a rate of the square of the number of users of the system (n^2) (Gilder, 1993). Robert Metcalfe originally developed the law in looking at the Ethernet, but it has also been applied to a host of new communications technologies, including cell phones and the Internet. While Metcalfe's Law has been credited with enabling us to understand the growth of the digital economy, it has recently come under fire for overestimating the value of networks. That is, telemarketers, junk faxers, and spammers do not add, and may even detract from, the value of the network (Briscoe, Odlyzko, and Tilly, 2006).

Now there is Reed's Law, which asserts that Metcalfe's Law may actually *understate* the actual network effects—and hence value—of so-called social networks. In a social networking environment, one is not just connected to the entire network as a whole, but also to many significant subsets of the whole network. As a result, a network that supports easy group communication has a potential number of groups that can form that grows exponentially with the increase in network size (Reed, 1999).

Rebecca Grinter, a professor with Georgia Tech's College of Computing, commented that the Internet is serving a unique function. She observed: "The history of humanity is the history of being part of a group, having a group mentality, and the Internet makes a whole other set of those groups possible, and they don't have to be physically proximate to you; you can create content for people who are physically distant" (quoted in Walton, 2006, n.p.).

Enter Web 2.0

Much has been made about Web 2.0 and what exactly this term—and, indeed, this paradigm shift—means. It has been described by researchers for the Pew Internet & American Life Project as a "catch-all buzzword" (Madden and Fox, 2006, n.p.). Indeed, Boutin (2006) observed that right now, Web 2.0 is a term that currently encompasses "a mishmash of tools and sites that foster collaboration and participation" (n.p.). These include not only the realm of blogs, but social media sites like MySpace, video-sharing sites like YouTube, photo-sharing sites like Flickr, and collective wikis, most notably Wikipedia. Nail (2006) characterizes this phenomenon as "participatory theater," where "the principles and technologies of Web 2.0 evolve the user experience

from hunting and gathering to creation and social connections" (n.p.). It presents an Internet that enables and entices individuals to contribute as well as consume. Web 2.0 has been defined in various ways, but in its simplest terms, according to Hinchcliffe (2006), "Web 2.0 is made of people" (n.p.). One of the defining characteristics of Web 2.0 is the ability to control your own content. This, for instance, eliminates Google as a Web 2.0 application, simply because "users *contribute* content to many of Google's applications, but they don't fully *control* it" (emphasis in the original) (Madden and Fox, 2006, n.p.).

Grossman (2006) characterized Web 2.0 as nothing less than "a massive social experiment," one that undoubtedly "harnesses the stupidity of crowds as well as its wisdom" (n.p.). What we are seeing is the wisdom—and yes, inanity, hate, perversions, and generosity—of crowds in action as more and more people turn to the Internet for—and to create—information. As Levy and Stone (2006) observed, we no longer *go on to* the Internet, as more and more, increasing numbers of us live our lives on and through the web. From their perspective, it used to be that "cyberspace was someplace else, [but today] the web is where we live" (n.p.). They add: "What makes the web alive is, quite simply, us.... As we keep offloading our activities to the web and adding previously unmanageable or unthinkable new pursuits, it's fair to say that our everyday existence is a network effect." Levy and Stone believe that this collective intelligence means that "the smartest guy in the room is everybody" (n.p.).

Social Networking

Take the most recent data on web traffic. As can be seen in Table 9 on page 44, two of the most visited websites in the U.S. are social networking sites (MySpace and Facebook). When you include the most popular video-sharing site (YouTube), the leading blog-hosting site (Blogger.com), along with Wikipedia and Craig's List, half of the most trafficked websites are true Web 2.0 sites, with user-generated content (eMarketer, 2007). Even more dramatic is the fact that these sites have been around for relatively short periods of time in web-years (as compared to sites such as Google, Yahoo, and MSN). They have thus experienced meteoric growth rates.

Table 9: Top 12 Websites by Traffic Count in the U.S. (Feb 2007)

Rank	Domain	URL
1.	Yahoo!	www.yahoo.com
2.	Google	www.google.com
3.	MySpace	www.myspace.com
4.	Microsoft Network (MSN)	www.msn.com
5.	eBay	www.ebay.com
6.	YouTube	www.youtube.com
7.	Amazon.com	www.amazon.com
8.	Wikipedia	www.wikipedia.org
9.	Craigslist.org	www.craigslist.org
10.	Facebook	www.facebook.com
11.	Windows Live	www.live.com
12.	Blogger.com	www.blogger.com

Source: Alexa, February 2007 (http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/top_sites?cc=US&ts_mode=country&lang=none)

Table 10 lists the 10 largest social networking sites. These destinations have an amazing engagement factor, which in online parlance is referred to as “stickiness” (the amount of time per visit that a person spends on the website). According to Carrigg (2007), the MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube social networking sites are among the stickiest found on the Internet today. In fact, in December 2006, the average MySpace user spent 28 minutes on each

visit to the site. Cumulatively, the stickiness of these social networking sites has a dramatic impact on how we interact with the web. In fact, in that same month, Americans spent approximately *28 billion minutes* on the MySpace site alone, which translates into an astonishing 11.9 percent of *all* time spent online. In contrast, for all the attention these sites receive, only 2.1 percent of users’ time is spent on Google, .6 percent on YouTube, and .4 percent on Wikipedia (Meattle, 2007). Still, the cumulative popularity and stickiness of the top websites means that even as the Internet grows, we tend to be concentrating our web time on the top sites. In fact, 40 percent of all pageviews are of pages on the top 20 ranked websites, which represents a dramatic increase in the concentration of online time on specific sites over the past few years (Mahony, 2006).

The growth of social networking sites is phenomenal. Consider the growth rates of MySpace (Figure 13) and YouTube (Figure 14). Likewise, the use and size of Wikipedia is growing at a fantastic rate, as detailed in the sidebar “Wikiality” (see pages 46–47).

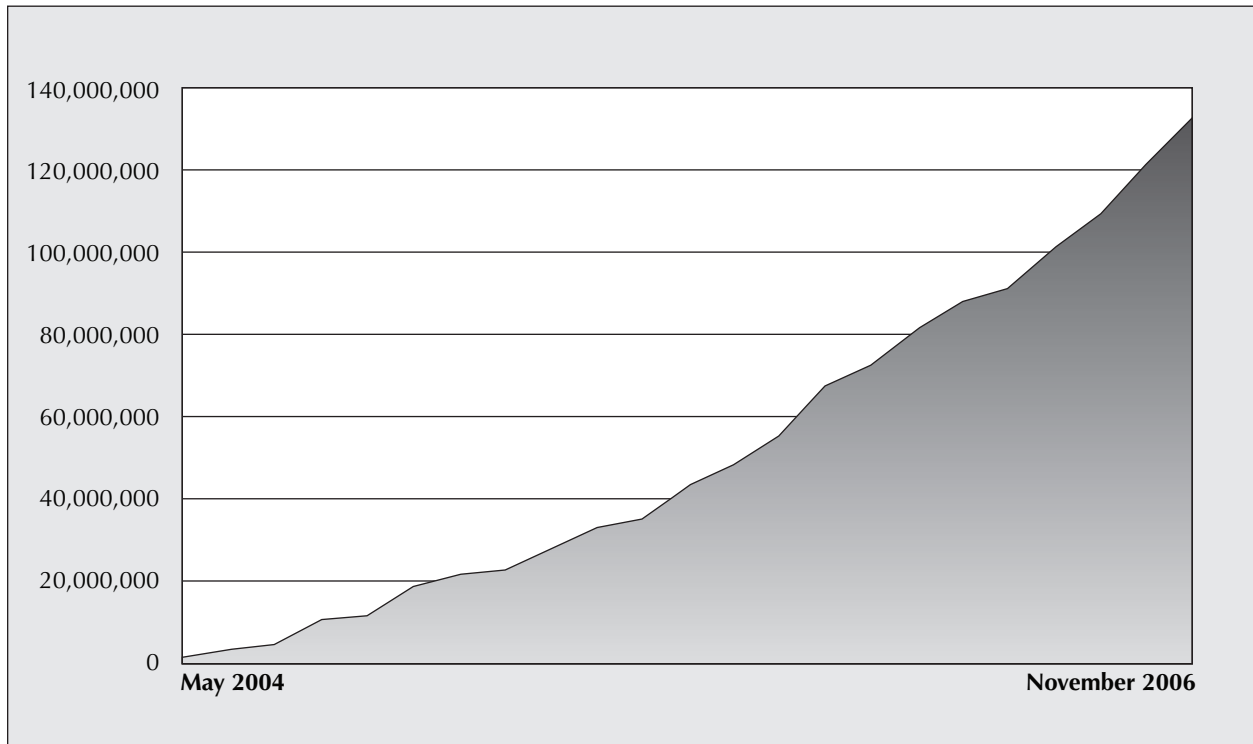
What is interesting to note is that academics, statisticians, analysts, and ordinary bloggers are engaged in quite a debate on the growth of Web 2.0 sites and whether the growth rate is exponential or logarithmic in nature (see, for example, Suh, 2006 and Jaokar, 2006). One thing is certain: Web 2.0 sites in general and most social networking sites are growing at rates *considerably faster* than the growth of the Internet itself.

Table 10: The 10 Largest Social Networking Sites (Aug 2006)

Domain	Domain Rank	Unique Visitors	One-Year Change	Average Visits per Month	Average Length of Visits (in minutes)
MySpace	7	56,842,204	148%	17.9	29
YouTube	18	23,682,785	98889%	7.6	17
Blogger	35	16,271,085	30%	2.8	5
Classmates	47	13,583,236	-25%	1.7	8
Facebook	60	11,291,005	343%	11.9	13
Xanga	97	8,630,958	-31%	5.5	10
Yahoo Groups	99	8,378,209	0%	4.3	8
Flickr	148	6,394,042	291%	1.6	6
Yahoo 360	212	4,821,259	138%	4.4	6
MyYearbook	225	4,800,074	15882%	1.9	8

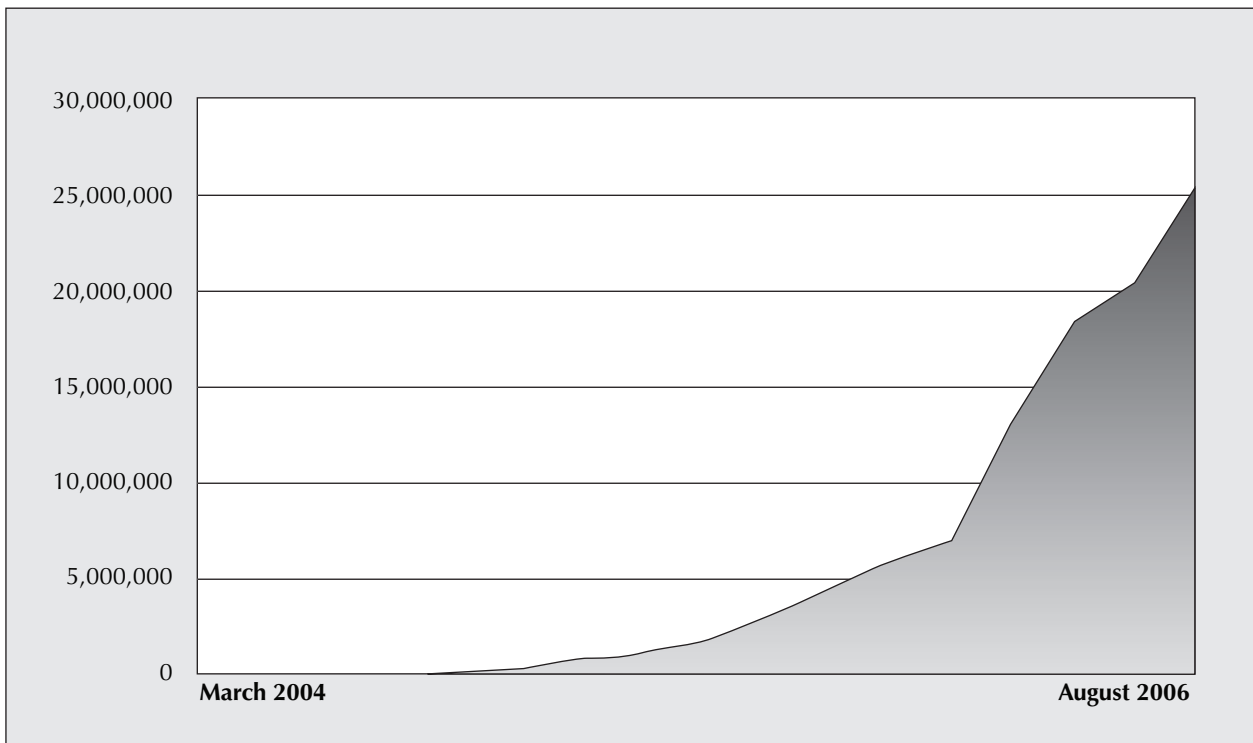
Source: Adapted from Compete, Inc. (2006).

Figure 13: Growth in MySpace Registered Users 2004–2006



Source: Yuh (2006).

Figure 14: Number of Visitors to YouTube



Source: Meattle (2006).

Wikiality

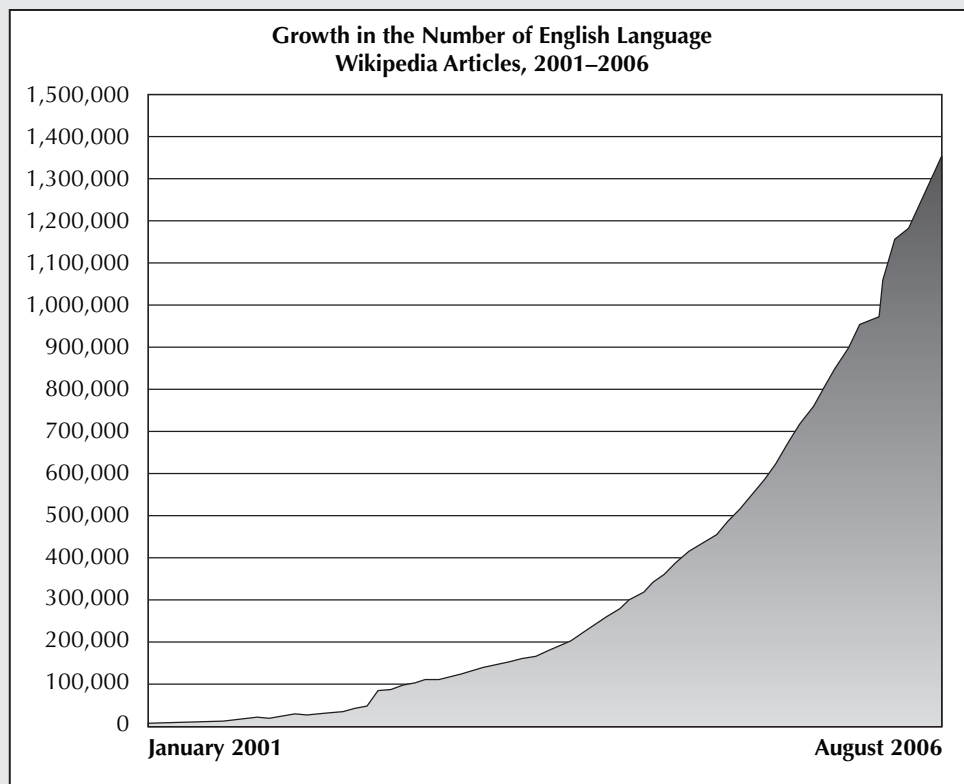
Wikipedia is a great example of a Web 2.0 site and the foremost “wiki.” Started in 2001, Wikipedia continues to grow as a destination site for information on the web. The formula for Wikipedia’s growth has been that: “more content leads to more traffic, which leads to more edits, which generates more content” (Wikipedia, 2007, n.p.). As can be seen, the number of active participants on the site continues to grow rapidly, as does the activity on the site (in terms of articles posted and edited on the site). In the four-year period spanning October 2002 to October 2006, the number of English-language articles on Wikipedia has doubled once every 346 days. Analysis of the pace of growth shows that, despite a bit of a slowdown of late, by 2008 Wikipedia could well approach 4 million English-language articles in size.

Wikipedia has at times come under fire for the accuracy of its articles, most notably for:

- The biography of noted journalist John Seigenthaler, Sr., who was named in his Wikipedia entry as being a longtime suspect in the assassinations of both John and Robert Kennedy (Kornblum, 2005).
- The antics of comedian Stephen Colbert, whose viewers of “The Colbert Report” participated in pranks to inaccurately change Wikipedia articles on topics ranging from African elephants to George Washington, all in an effort to prove what he terms “Wikiality,” which he defines as “the idea that if you claim something to be true and enough people agree with you, it becomes true” (Ahrens, 2006, n.p.).

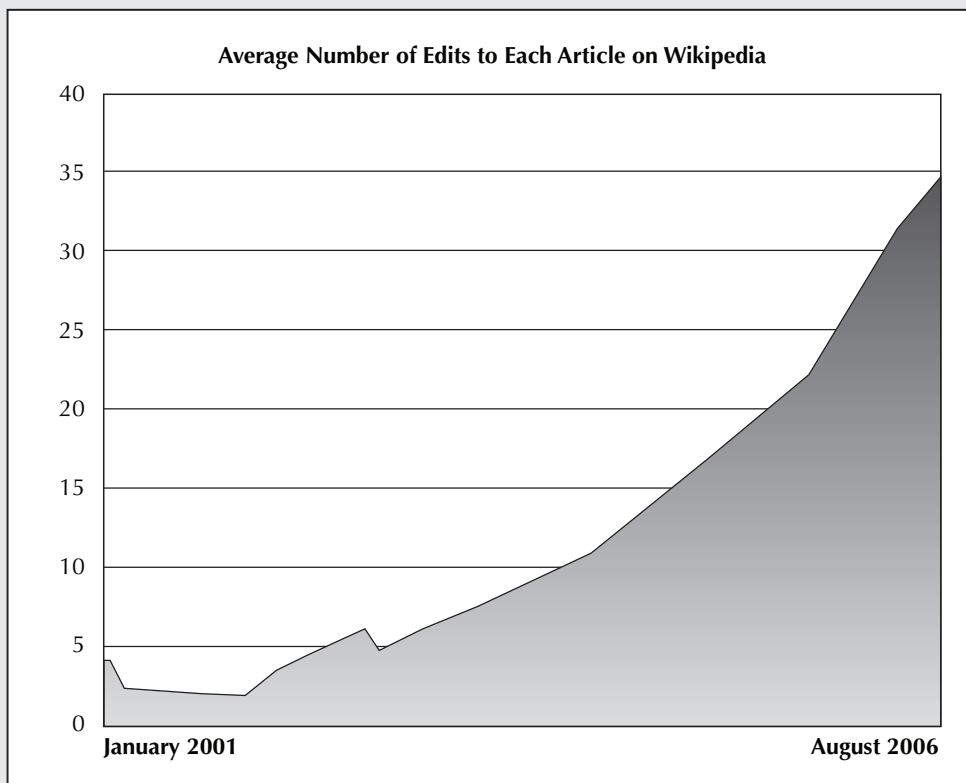
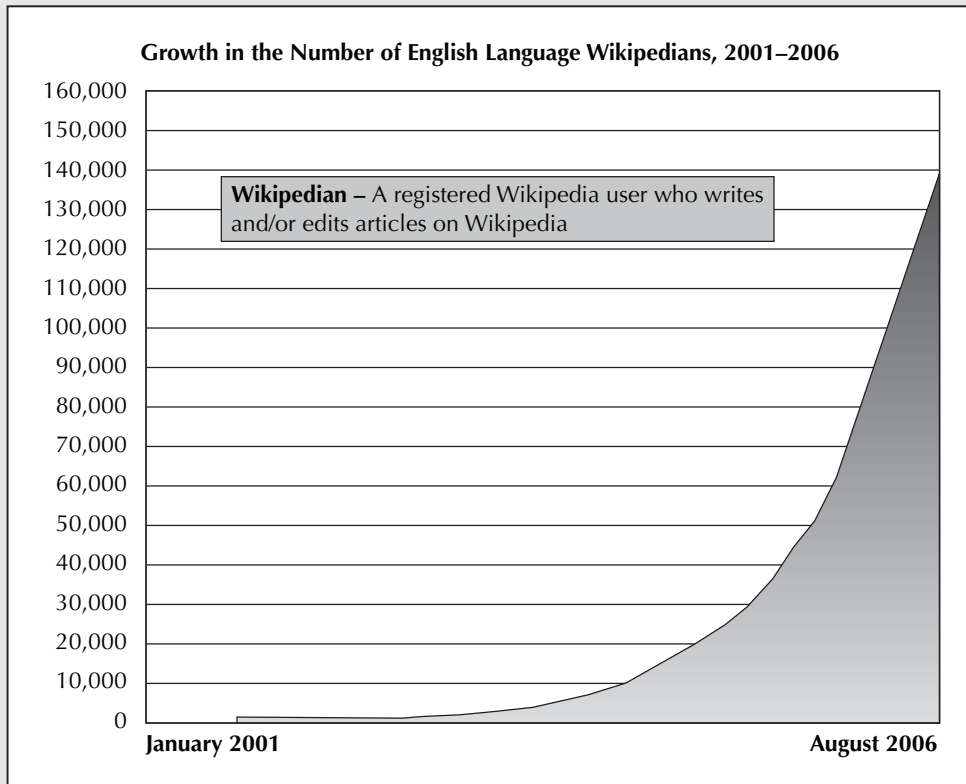
Wiki

From the Hawaiian term for “quick.” This is a website that allows readers to edit and contribute content. It is an open, collaborative site on the web, which may be publicly available (as in the best known wiki, Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>) or, alternatively, it may be a wiki on an intranet or limited to invited users. In the latter case, the wiki can be used by organizations as an internal collaborative tool for knowledge and information exchange.



Source: Wikipedia (2007)—Modelling Wikipedia’s Growth

However, a major peer-reviewed study carried out by the British journal *Nature* found that the encyclopedic articles found on Wikipedia were just as accurate as—or no more inaccurate than—entries found in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Giles, 2005). Also, the power of collective intelligence does shine through on Wikipedia; with more articles come more visitors and more edits to ensure the accuracy of the information on the site.



Will social networking be a long-term phenomenon? John B. Horrigan, associate director for research at the Pew Internet & American Life Project, recently observed: "It might not grow much beyond 20 percent of Internet users getting into a social network for a certain amount of time. As is typically the case with new Internet tools, that 20 percent may boil down to only 3 percent or 4 percent who remain heavy users. Today in listservs and chat rooms, 2 percent to 3 percent of all users are responsible for 90 percent of traffic. It's difficult to say if social networking will follow the same trend" (opinion cited in Siwicki, 2006, n.p.). From the perspective of Peter Daboll, president and CEO of comScore Media Metrix, "The popularity of social networking is not expected to wane in the near future," citing the developments in this area as phenomenal and global in scope (quoted in Siwicki, 2006, n.p.). The demographics of social networking are showing that it is becoming the preferred activity of today's youth. Recent studies have shown that the majority of American teens who are online visit social networking sites, with approximately half of these online teens visiting sites like MySpace and Facebook at least once a day, and almost a quarter visiting several times each day (Williamson, 2007).

Quite notably, these social networking teens are highly comfortable with blogging, with fully three-quarters of them reading and posting comments on blogs (Lenhart and Madden, 2007). Thus, from the perspective of Steve Jones, a communications professor at the University of Illinois–Chicago, "The Internet is fulfilling a need for sharing, and the stuff that we're sharing is essentially the stuff of our everyday lives" (quoted in Kornblum, 2006, n.p.).

As the social networking revolution continues, it will be important for government not to impede its progress. For instance, the Deleting Online Predators Act of 2006 (DOPA) (H.R. 5319) was passed by the House of Representatives 410 to 15 in the 109th Congress. The bill, which was introduced in May 2006 by Representative Michael Fitzpatrick (R-PA), would prohibit schools and public libraries that receive federal funds from allowing minor youth access to most social networking, chat, and even blog sites. Many websites allow public user profiles and provide forums. Examples include Yahoo, Amazon.com, Slashdot, RedState, CNET Networks, and thousands of others. Despite

the bill's overwhelming passage, it has been harshly criticized by both the American Library Association and other interest groups as being overly restrictive, impeding legitimate educational use and restricting access to these sites by the economically disadvantaged and physically disabled, whose only access may come at such public facilities. The bill was also criticized for being overly broad, as many other websites, other than the obvious MySpace and Facebook sites, may be restricted from view. Indeed, websites such as Yahoo, Amazon.com, and CNET Networks, all of which allow for the creation of personal profiles and comments, may unintentionally fall under the restrictions in the bill (Deleting Online Predators Act of 2006, 2007). Indeed, Henry Jenkins (2006), the director of MIT's Comparative Media Studies Program and the author of *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, accused Congress of "wiggling out" over social networking sites, criticizing the proposed bill for exploiting parental fears over MySpace and other such websites.

There will also be a developing need—and business opportunity—for services to deal with the plethora of information and information exchange opportunities afforded in a Web 2.0 world. One such idea is the concept of hyperaggregation. According to Om Malik (2007), the founder of GigaOmniMedia, Inc. and executive editor for his blog at GigaOM.com: "Since the dawn of the web, we've been plagued by too much information and too little time to consume it. It's impossible to keep up with dozens of social networks, millions of videos, and thousands of blogs" (n.p.) With these new hyperaggregation services, users will be able to select input from all forms of sites and be greeted online with a dashboard that shows all of the online activity that is most relevant to them, giving them a means of keeping up in an online world "where there's too much content and not enough packaging" (Malik, 2007, n.p.). Examples of hyperaggregators today include:

- Doggdot.us (<http://www.doggdot.us/>)
- Original Signal (<http://web20.originalsignal.com>)
- Popurls (<http://www.popurls.com>)
- Spokeo (<http://www.spokeo.com/>)
- Viral Videos (<http://www.viralvideos.com>).

Blogging 101

A Brief History of Blogging

And it is a very brief history. In 2003, the word *blog* first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary (Lyons, 2005); a year later, *blog* was named Merriam-Webster's "word of the year" for 2004. A blog can be simply defined this way: "A blog is an easy-to-use content management tool. When you 'blog,' you are instantly adding new content to your site via a web interface. No technical or programming skills are necessary" (Weil, 2004, n.p.).

The roots of the phenomenon that is now referred to as blogging can be traced back to Tim Berners-Lee, the originator of the World Wide Web, who created a "What's New" page in 1992 (Dvorak, 2005). In 1994, online personal diaries began to emerge on topics spanning areas such as diets, movies, politics, and sex (Sullivan, 2005). Jorn Barger, editor of one of the original sites, coined the term *weblog* in 1997, defining it as "a web page where a weblogger 'logs' all the other web pages she finds interesting." The shorter version, *blog*, was coined by Peter Merholz in 1999, when he broke the word "weblog" into the phrase "we blog." "Blog" then grew in acceptance as a shorter form of the noun (weblog) and also for the first time as a verb, with to blog meaning "to edit one's weblog or a post to one's weblog" (Blood, 2004, n.p.). The first blog is said to have gone up in December 1997, and by 1998 there were 23 known blogs (Lyons, 2005).

The key to the rapid rise of blogging is the ability of users to easily create content and to be able to instantly update their online websites. Probably the seminal event in the growth of blogging was the innovation made by Evan Williams. In 1999, Williams, then living in San Francisco, was seeking

a way to more easily update his own website. He created a simple software solution that eliminated the need to know how to use HTML to do so, allowing for websites to be updated by simply typing text into a text box. This software became the foundation for blogger.com, one of the first blog creation and hosting sites (Ramos, 2004).

Today, blogs can be created using a variety of free or low-cost software and/or hosting services, such as those listed in Table 11.

The 'Next Big Thing' or an 'Internet Wasteland'?

Blogs have been characterized in nothing less than laudatory terms, hailed as:

- "The 'next big thing' on the Internet" (Gallo, 2004)
- "The next killer app" (Weil, 2003, n.p.)
- "The web's coup de grace, the heart of a personal publishing revolution to rival desktop publishing" (Johnson, 2005, n.p.)

Table 11: Major Blog Software/Hosting Providers

Service Provider	URL
Blogger	www.blogger.com
ExpressionEngine	www.pmachine.com
LiveJournal	www.livejournal.com
Moveable Type	www.sixapart.com/movabletype
MSN Spaces	www.spaces.msn.com
TypePad	www.typepad.com
Word Press	www.wordpress.org
Xanga	www.xanga.com

- “The most profound revolution in publishing since the printing press” (Sullivan, 2005, n.p.).
- “The new national pastime” (Shinder, 2006, n.p.)

On the other hand, many people associate blogs as a phenomenon of teenagers and college students. When they do think about them, they think of either the folks who blog about their cats, dogs, or hamsters (Butler, 2006), or the “bad news” stories about blogs, such as when a blogger—the person creating and maintaining the blog—named his murderer in his last, dying entry in his blog (Wyld, 2006).

On the flip side, blogs have been categorized in a variety of non-flattering ways:

- An embodiment of Sturgeon’s Law, named for the science-fiction writer who originated the notion that “90 percent of everything is crud” (quoted in Manjoo, 2002a, n.p.).
- “The perilous prospect of a widening Internet wasteland” (Anonymous, 2003, n.p.).
- A “‘barbarized’ environment” (Mortensen, 2004).
- “Usually a parade of the author’s private peccadilloes” (Johnson, 2005, n.p.)
- A collection of “private journals and diaries exposing what should rather have been kept in a drawer” (Orlowski, 2003, n.p.).

And bloggers have been called “an online lynch mob spouting liberty but spewing lies, libel, and invective” (Lyons, 2005, n.p.).

Chris Anderson is the author of *The Long Tail*, which speaks to the fragmentation of the marketplace and mass audiences with the advent of the Internet. He recently commented that blogs are an extension of this overall trend, as they are an excellent way of communicating with microaudiences, with blogs like his own being “exactly what four people want” (quoted in Schechner, 2006, p. W2). Yet, whatever the size of the blogger’s audience and to what extent, if any, the blog is linked to other blogs and websites, the real importance of the most typical blog—one that more resembles a personal diary—is in the mind of the blogger himself. As Lampa (2004) put it, blogging produces

“an online imagined community resulting from the shared experience of instant publishing” (n.p.). However, according to research from the MIT Media Lab, while bloggers typically have an idea of who their core audience is for their blog, most often the silent readership of a blog (those who do not post or make comments) may be far larger than the actual participants in the blog (Vigas, 2004). Yet, Shafer (2006) commented, “If all these people really want from the web is a hobby and to talk to their friends and family, they’d be better off taking pottery lessons and purchasing more cell-phone minutes” (n.p.).

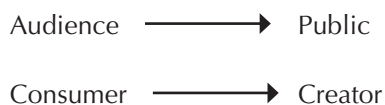
Tim Berners-Lee, the developer of the World Wide Web, recently commented:

The [original] idea was that anybody who used the web would have a space where they could write, and so the first browser was an editor; it was a writer as well as a reader. Every person who used the web had the ability to write something. It was very easy to make a new web page and comment on what somebody else had written, which is very much what blogging is about. For years I had been trying to address the fact that the web for most people wasn’t a creative space; there were other editors, but editing web pages became difficult and complicated for people. What happened with blogs and with wikis, these editable web spaces, was that they became much more simple. When you write a blog, you don’t write complicated hypertext, you just write text, so I’m very, very happy to see that now it’s gone in the direction of becoming more of a creative medium (quoted in Lawson, 2005, n.p.).

Gillmor (2003) spoke of the rise of the so-called “Semantic Web,” driven by blogging as “a cross between self-expression and journalism.” This is akin to the earliest days of the Internet, as “the success of the web was due not to mass production and economies of scale, but rather to distributed development of local content and economies driven by individual passion” (n.p.).

Blogs have been categorized as a transformational catalyst, one in which the traditional web roles of

content creator and content reader are blurred. In the view of Blood (2004), the new roles become:



Mortensen (2004) chronicled that blogging is now following the same development pattern as the Internet itself. Whereas in the early days of the Internet, access was difficult and limited to academicians, researchers, government officials, and other elites, the development of browser technologies enabled the Internet to widen its audience and reach, while greatly changing—and perhaps decreasing—the quality of the content and interactions online. With the wide availability of blog creation software tools and blog hosting services, no longer does one need specialized computer knowledge and resources to create content online. Dan Hunter of the University of Pennsylvania maintains that blogging “is not a fad.... It’s the rise of amateur content, which is replacing the centralized, controlled content done by professionals” (quoted in Knowledge@Wharton, 2005, n.p.). Indeed, it has been observed that “the heart of the blogging movement has been always been driven by amateurism” (Drezner and Farrell, 2004, n.p.). Indeed, blogs have been categorized as the rise of easily self-created web content. According to a recent report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project: “One of the earliest observations about the Internet turns out to be true: Anyone can be a publisher on the web. The online commons is full of virtual chatter and teeming with self-made content. It ranges from the simplest vanities like pictures of ‘me and my puppy’ to the most profound kinds of political argument—and everything in between” (Lenhart, Fallows, and Horrigan, 2004, n.p.).

Touring the Blogosphere

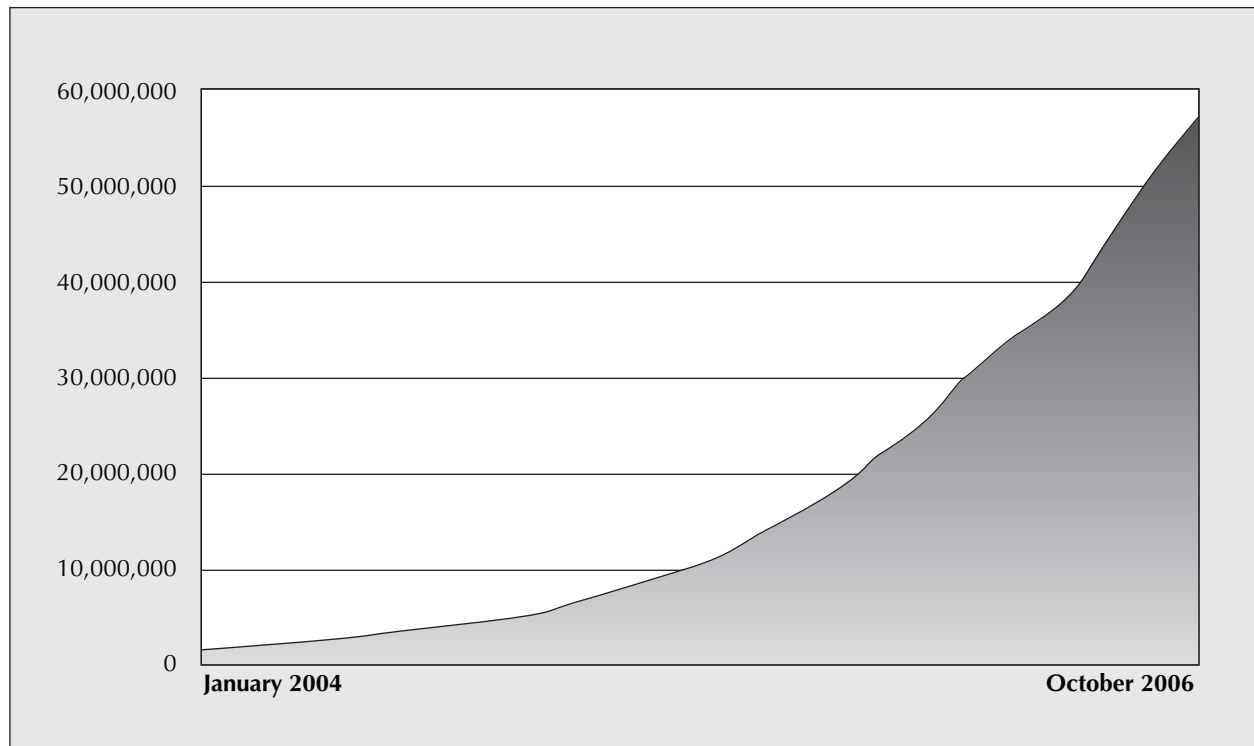
The totality of all blogs is commonly referred to as the “blogosphere.” Blogging reached its “tipping point” in 2002, when the blogosphere grew from a self-contained community to a wider, global marvel (Manjoo, 2002a). Today, as Drezner and Farrell (2004) observed, the blogosphere has become “a new medium” that is “an elaborate network with agenda-setting power” (n.p.). According to Glenn Reynolds, the blogger behind the popular Instapundit (<http://instapundit.com/>) site, the blogosphere may

be thought of as “a sort of intercontinental coffee-house buzzing with discussion and debate” (quoted in Hiler, 2002, n.p.).

The statistics on blogging are indeed mind-boggling. According to the blog analyst firm Technorati, a new blog is created every second of every day. Every hour, 54,000 posts are made to blogs, for a total of 1.3 million new blog posts each day. All told, the blogosphere continues to double in size every six months. With approximately 60 million blogs in existence today, the blogosphere is an astonishing *60 times* larger in size than it was a mere three years ago (see Figure 15 on page 52) (Sifry, 2006). Approximately half of all blogs are “active,” in that they have been updated in the last 90 days, with approximately 13 percent having been updated on a weekly basis (Perrone, 2005). The blogosphere is also a very international environment, as evidenced by the linguistic data presented in Figure 16 on page 52. As can be seen, while English is the leading language of blogging, 61 percent of blogging is being done in a variety of other languages.

The true accuracy of analysts’ projections of the actual size of the blogosphere has generated intense controversy. The blogosphere has been characterized as an “iceberg,” in which the vast majority of blogs either are “one day wonders” that are created and then never updated or added to by their creators, or are written for “nanoaudiences,” largely composed of a blogger’s friends and family (Henning, 2003). There are also serious concerns about spam blogs and spam posts, which clutter the blogosphere (though Technorati has refined its tracking methodology to try to eliminate automated postings and blogs) (Sifry, 2006). Burton (2006) observed that Technorati, the leading source of blog statistics, is counting a large number of inactive blogs in the millions of blogs it counts as being part of the blogosphere. Thus, he and other observers believe that we are seeing more linear, as opposed to exponential, growth in the size of the blogosphere. Can the trend lines continue? Surely, any reasonable person looking at the charts realizes there must be a topping-out point (else, would we all have our own personal blog by 2015, and if so, who would be reading them?). According to Gartner, the total number of bloggers will peak at around 100 million sometime in 2007, and over time there will be “a steady state” of at least 30

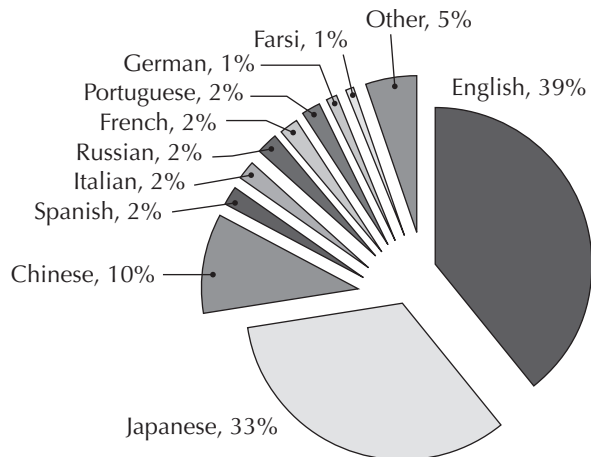
Figure 15: Growth in the Cumulative Number of Blogs Tracked by Technorati, 2004–2006



Source: eMarketer (2006) and Sifry (2006).

million active bloggers and 30 million frequent commenters/contributors worldwide (Garrett, 2006). Whatever the actual growth of blogging, the percentage of the web that is composed of blogs is still minuscule. Branscombe (2005) recently commented that “even the large numbers of blogs are a drop in the ocean compared to the rest of the web” (n.p.). This is true when one considers that the number of web pages, as opposed to web domains and web-sites, is in the billions and growing every day.

Figure 16: The Languages of the Blogosphere, October 2006



There is general agreement, however, that the demographics of the blogosphere are intriguing. As can be seen in Table 12, the most recent study on the subject from the Pew Internet & American Life Project has found that the blogosphere is a younger, more diverse environment than the Internet and society in general. Bloggers are also more likely to have broadband access and to be urban dwellers (Lenhart and Fox, 2006). This makes bloggers (and blog readers) particularly of interest to advertisers, marketers, and, yes, political candidates.

Why Blog?

Bloggers blog for a wide variety of reasons, professional and personal. A recent report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project found a variety of motivations, which are listed in Table 13.

Yet, the most important part of blogging may not be obvious to the blogger himself, as the very exercise of writing the blog raises one’s self-awareness. And by virtue of its being in the public sphere, “these fragments, pieced together over months, can provide an unexpectedly intimate view of what it is to be a particular individual in a particular place at a particular time” (Blood, 2000, n.p.). According to a recent

Table 12: The Demographics of Bloggers vs. Internet Users in General

Demographic Groups	Bloggers	All Internet Users
Sex		
Men	54%	49%
Women	46%	51%
Age		
18–29	54%	24%
30–49	30%	45%
50–64	14%	24%
65+	2%	7%
Race/Ethnicity		
White (non-Hispanic)	60%	74%
Black (non-Hispanic)	11%	9%
Hispanic (English-speaking)	19%	11%
Location		
Suburban	51%	54%
Urban	36%	30%
Rural	13%	16%
Other	10%	6%
Access Speed		
Dial-up	20%	34%
Broadband	79%	62%

Source: Lenhart and Fox (2006).

survey of bloggers, approximately half of them view their blogging activity as a form of therapy (eMarketer, 2005b). Indeed, writing has been shown to be an extremely powerful activity; the more one writes, the better one thinks (Manjoo, 2002b). This can be an important method of self-development for everyone. For executives or public officials, this means they can use the blog as a means of self-analysis; at the same time, the organization's stakeholders can gain a better awareness of the individual in the office. In the view of Dave Sifry, CEO of Technorati, a blog can be looked upon as "the record of the exhaust of a person's attention stream over time." He continued, "You actually feel like you know the person. You see their style, the words they use, their kids, whatever there is" (quoted in Penenberg, 2005, n.p.).

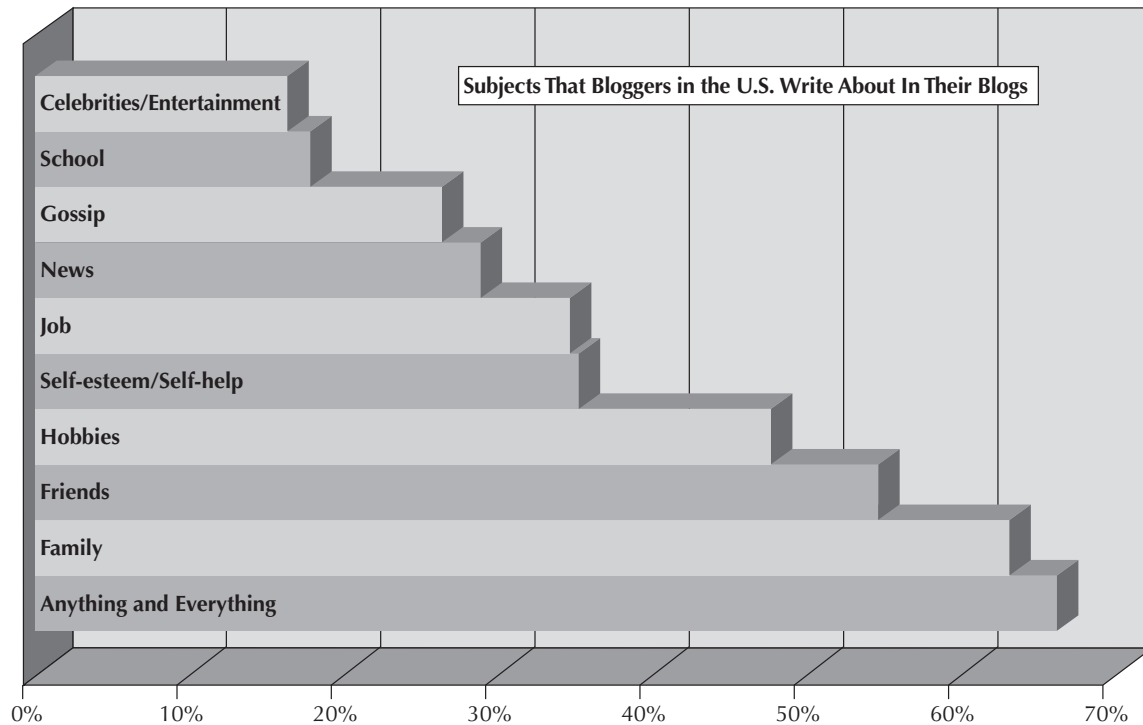
Table 13: Reasons Why Bloggers Blog

Motivation	Percent in Agreement
To express yourself creatively	77%
To document your personal experiences or share them with others	76%
To stay in touch with friends and family	59%
To share practical knowledge or skills with others	64%
To motivate other people to action	61%
To entertain people	61%
To store resources or information that is important to you	49%
To influence the way other people think	51%
To network or to meet new people	50%
To make money	15%

Source: Lenhart and Fox (2006).

What do bloggers write about? As can be seen in Figure 17 on page 54, a recent survey of 600 bloggers found that they pontificate on a wide variety of topics. The blogosphere is filled with blogs on just about every subject by just about everyone imaginable—and some that seem unimaginable. Witness the blogs of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (see the sidebar "Iran's Blogging President" on page 54) and space tourist Anousheh Ansari (see the sidebar "Blogging from Space" on page 55).

Figure 17: Subjects That Bloggers in the U.S. Write About in Their Blogs



Source: Adapted from eMarketer (2005a).

Iran's Blogging President

One of the most curious blogs in the entire blogosphere belongs to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, available at <http://www.ahmadinejad.ir/>. Launched in August 2006, the blog contains the musings of Iran's president on everything from the current nuclear crisis with the United States and Israel to his childhood and university days. The move is viewed as curious for the leader, based on his anti-Western and anti-modernism rhetoric, and especially because the Iranian government had itself recently cracked down on bloggers (Colby, 2006).



Bogle (2006) commented:

“With Iran maintaining its relatively isolationistic stance in the world, the last thing you’d expect to see is their outspoken president reaching out via a social software application; and yet you’d be wrong. But then again, if you take a moment to consider the implications of this move, it really shouldn’t be that surprising. With few exceptions, Ahmadinejad’s fiery speeches go largely unnoticed by the rest of the world. Not because of lack of interest, but because they are meticulously filtered and edited down by both the traditional media and politicians alike. Use of a blog, by contrast, enables him to circumvent these filters and circulate his unedited statements to the entire planet. Guerrilla media is nothing new certainly, but its use by such a predominant figure is (n.p.)”

His blog features both online polling (the first asked blog readers if they believe that the United States and Israel are “pulling the trigger for another world war”) and allows for comments back to the blogger (which Ahmadinejad claims he spends much time reading). The blog displays very favorable comments ostensibly made by readers of Ahmadinejad’s often lengthy writings, many of whom claim to be from the United States.

Whatever may transpire between Iran and the rest of the world, his blog is, as one keen observer put it, “proving that the blogosphere is indeed an ocean teeming with an endless assortment of wildlife” (Colby, 2006, n.p.).

Blogging in Space

In September 2006, Anousheh Ansari, a 40-year-old naturalized American citizen from Iran, became the first person to blog from space. Ansari, a former telecom executive from Dallas, who also sponsored the X Prize for the first private spaceflight, paid approximately \$20 million for her spaceflight. Ansari shared her thoughts and experiences before, during, and after her flight on a Russian Soyuz spacecraft to the International Space Station on her personal blog (<http://spaceblog.xprize.org>) (Koenig, 2006; Piquepaille, 2006).


Ansari (2006) wrote on her blog:


“A long, long time ago, in a country far, far away ... there was a young girl who had her eyes fixed on the twinkling stars of the night skies over Tehran. Back then the air was not so polluted and you could see many stars in the night skies. Summertime, when they would set up the beds outside on the balcony to sleep, she would lay in her bed and look deep into the mysterious darkness of the universe and think to herself, What’s out there? Is someone out there awake in her bed, and gazing at her in the night sky? Will she ever find her... See her... Will she fly out there and float in the wonderful, boundless freedom of space?

Well, as fate would have it, yes....” (n.p.).

During her spaceflight, Ansari blogged frequently. She posted photos from Flickr and videos from YouTube on the blog. Ansari reported emotionally not only about what she was seeing and doing (including washing your hair in space, feeling ill, and receiving a cell phone call from her husband), but also about some of the quite often vicious comments that she read on her blog. In fact, at one point she was driven to tears from reading the comments to her blog.







Revolution Through Competition.

ANOUSHEH ANSARI SPACE BLOG

September 30, 2006 | [World Hold On](#)
Filed under: [Space Explorer](#) — by Anousheh @ 7:19 pm

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

[Anousheh Ansari Space Blog](#)

[the pages by Anousheh](#)

[Be the Change](#) inspired by and dedicated to Anousheh by [Deep Dish](#).
[On sale soon!](#)
[All proceeds shared among Anousheh's charities.](#)

[X PRIZE Foundation](#)
[AnoushehAnsari.com](#)

Corporate Blogging

Introduction

Probably the foremost parallel to blogging in government can be found in corporate America. Today, businesses are having to consider blog strategies for their organizations, and their leaders are having to personally decide whether or not to enter the blogosphere. They are also having to make tough decisions in regards to both blogging policies and their personnel who are blogging. Through their own corporate blogs, organizations are finding that blogging gives their company a voice in this important new medium (Evans and Stroll, 2005). Even professional sports teams and their owners are seeing blogs as a new platform (see the sidebar “Sports Teams and Blogs”).

For organizations and their leaders, blogging presents an interesting proposition. For companies and other large organizations, including government agencies and nonprofit groups, blogging promotes a new sense of openness with an organization’s stakeholders, including employees, customers, the public, and the media. Such an environment of openness and *Glasnost* is especially valuable in an era of intense scrutiny and mistrust of large institutions. As such, many leading organizations—for example, IBM, Sun Microsystems, Intel, Quark, and SAP—have begun using a whole range of social networking tools, including blogs with text and audio/video, to promote communications between peers and to allow a forum where “employees can talk back to their bosses” (Vara, 2006, p. B1).

Surveys have shown that individuals are far more trusting of blogs written by the executives and employees of an individual company, as opposed to an official corporate blog (eMarketer, 2005b). For companies, this offers the very real prospect that

blogs can enable their executives to be viewed as real people and leaders. As Dale Borland, the president and CEO of Marqui, a Canadian blogging and marketing consultancy, put it: “A blog by Jack Welch or Warren Buffett would garner a lot of interest if it revealed what they cope with day-to-day, rather than what we hear about from the canned communications we get from their organizations” (opinion cited in Holloway, 2007, n.p.). Blogging expert Ted Demopoulos believes “that people just don’t want to read this dry, sterile corporate and marketing speak” that is the primary content of corporate websites. He predicts that there will be less formality to organizational websites and that blogs will be an important, less formal component of most corporate sites (opinion cited in Garrett, 2006, n.p.).

Yet, corporations should be careful about entering the blogosphere, as prominent firms already have learned painful lessons about how not to engage in corporate blogging. One of the principal lessons is to be genuine. Take the experience of Dr Pepper/Seven Up, for instance. The company created a blog aimed at promoting a new flavored milk product called “Raging Cow,” in which a cow character made comments on a blog titled “Pasteurize This,” chronicling his fictional cross-country trip in search of the ultimate milkshake. The effort was universally scorned; the site, which was aimed at targeting 18- to 24-year-olds, was perceived as being highly juvenile (Wreden, 2004). Dr Pepper/Seven Up’s PR firm, Richards Interactive, offered cash and in-kind gifts to a half-dozen influential 18- to 24-year-old bloggers for pushing the drink in their blogs. However, the company’s plan backfired when bloggers instead wrote in protest about the PR firm’s plan, labeling it a “scam,” ridiculing Dr Pepper/Seven Up, and calling for a product boycott (Ochman, 2004).

Sports Teams and Blogs

The Phoenix Suns are the first professional sports team to embrace blogging. While countless teams, ranging from the pros to colleges and even high schools, have fan blogs, the Suns are the first to have an official team blog (<http://suns.marqui.com/blog/default.aspx>). According to Jeramie McPeck, the Phoenix Suns' vice president of interactive services, "We're always trying to do things that other teams aren't—and experiment with new online initiatives." McPeck believes that the team's blog "gives us a chance to communicate to our fans in a number of different ways from different voices within the organization" (quoted in Holloway, 2007, n.p.). And since the blog's inception at the start of the 2006–2007 season, regular contributions have been made by several players, team executives, coaches, broadcasters, and even the Suns Dancers. Could there be any correlation between the blog and the team's 61-21 record this past season?

The Suns are "blogoneers," who undoubtedly will be quickly followed by other sports teams to create a trend. Already, two very prominent owners in the world of sports are renowned bloggers: Ted Leonsis of the Washington Capitals and Wizards, who blogs on Ted's Take (<http://ted.aol.com/>), and Mark Cuban of the Dallas Mavericks, who blogs on BlogMaverick (<http://www.blogmaverick.com/>).

Some large companies have run into trouble for similar marketing efforts, including Wal-Mart for its fake blog "Wal-Marting Across America." The blog, which was supposedly created by a man and a woman traveling the country in an RV and staying in Wal-Mart parking lots, turned out to have been blogged by their public relations firm (Gunther, 2006). A term has been coined to capture such efforts—"astroturf marketing" (or "astroturfing"), which refers to an attempt to artificially create grassroots buzz for a company's product or service. Astroturf marketing has a negative connotation, primarily because of the deceptive tactics used (Whatis.com, 2007).

The Blogging CEO

Solomon (2005) observed: "A blog written at the top has the potential of providing news straight from the decision makers" (n.p.). However, Godin (2004)

remarked that good blogs work when they are based on:

- Candor
- Urgency
- Timeliness
- Pithiness
- Controversy
- Utility

Unfortunately, as Godin pointedly commented: "Does this sound like a CEO to you?" (n.p.).

Yes, there is skepticism about the ability of executives and companies to effectively communicate in the free-wheeling blog environment. Paul Argenti, professor of corporate communications at Dartmouth's Tuck

School of Business, recently observed: “It’s naive to think these [executive] blogs are anything other than carefully planned communications. Because of regulation and the possibility of attacks from antagonists, companies can’t be off the cuff in their communication.... [But] it’s a good thing that there’s more communication from senior executives, because people don’t want these folks sitting in an ivory tower” (quoted in Larson, 2005, n.p.). Solomon (2005) characterized the downside of blogging for CEOs and other senior executives in that they “are wary of stockholders’ perceptions and don’t provide the bare honesty expected of a decent blog” (n.p.). Indeed, there are also serious legal considerations to anything that a CEO or other high-ranking executive might say. Consider the example of Sun Microsystems’ CEO Jonathan Schwartz, who told readers of his blog that he abandoned an April Fool’s Day practical joke entry because it would have caused “serious engagement from the corporate legal team” (quoted in Graybow, 2005, n.p.).

For blogging executives, the activity asks them to be spontaneous, raw, and controversial, adjectives not typically associated with corporate success. From the perspective of Michael Smith, professor of communication at La Salle University, “In some respects, the image of an executive blogging is akin to the image of a portly person in a Speedo bathing suit—something doesn’t quite fit” (op. cited in Larson, 2005, n.p.). Bob Parsons, CEO of GoDaddy.com, an Internet domain name registration firm, believes that blogging is antithetical to the executive mind. He commented: “The blog is unsanitized. Most executives are too conservative, and too play-it-safe to do this” (quoted in (Graybow, 2005, n.p.). Bob Lutz, vice chairman of Global Product Development for General Motors, blogs about the GM cars he drives and designs on his executive blog at <http://www.fastlane.gmblogs.com>. He recently weighed in that while blogging seems right for him personally, the activity is not for every executive. Lutz observed: “Most senior executives rise to the top by being very analytical and buttoned up and left-brained. That very careful executive is probably not going to be a good blogger” (op. cited in Larson, 2005, n.p.).

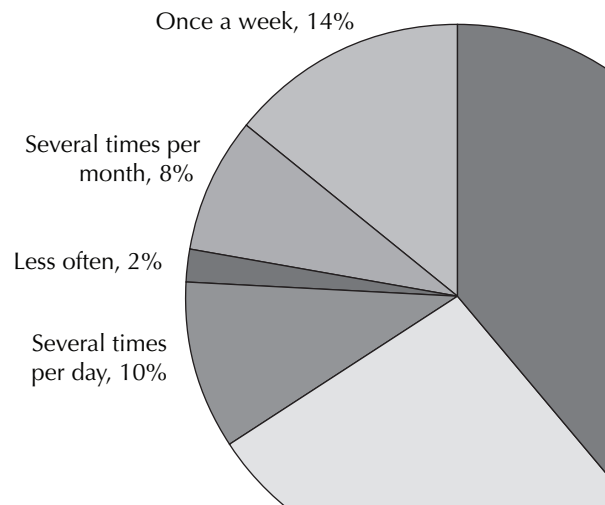
One of the appeals of blogging to senior corporate executives is that it affords them a richer, more interactive medium than a static press release or web posting, allowing for comments, dialogue, and feedback.

Randy Baseler, vice president of marketing for Boeing Commercial Airplanes, recently commented about blogging: “It helps you fine-tune how you’re going to use your messages. If we say it this way, do people understand, or will they look at us glassy-eyed? It gives you an idea how to shape your other communications” (quoted in Larson, 2005, n.p.).

Yet, despite this hesitancy, more and more top executives, both in the United States and around the world, are launching their own blogs (the author’s compilation of top-blogging U.S. executives is provided in Table 14, see pages 60–61). They are posting frequently (see Figure 18), and largely they are able to do so with limited need for assistance (see Figure 19). For top executives, the repeated refrain is that, quite often, it is the unintended benefits from blogging that are the most important (Panepento, 2006). Thus, while we may speak in terms of bettering corporate communications (both internally and externally) and bottom-line benefits to companies, the fact is that blogging, with the chance for introspection and feedback, may make one a better executive.

As can be seen in Figure 20, top executives do recognize the power of blogs for their organizations. Still, blogging executives are relatively rare. In a survey of 131 prominent CEOs, researchers found that only 7 percent of them currently had an executive blog and only 8 percent of their firms had a blog at all. This was despite the fact that approximately two-thirds of the surveyed CEOs reported that they had a familiarity with blogs (eMarketer, 2005c).

Figure 18: Frequency of Posting on a Corporate Blog

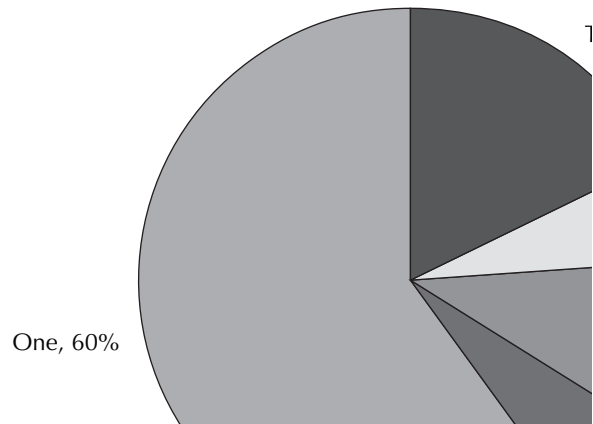


Source: Adapted from Hirsch and Nail (2006, p. 6).

Blogging and Internal Communications/Operations

Blogs can be used for internal communication and collaboration within an organization. They, along with wikis and even video and audio blogs, can present intriguing new ways to engage in knowledge management (Burns, 2005; Li, 2004). Robin Hopper, CEO of iUpload, pointed out: "Blogs are a drop-dead simple way to get content from people who we couldn't get content from otherwise. What is important in terms of corporate adoption is to stop thinking about blogs as a technology or blogs in and of themselves, but think of them as a tactic to empower a whole new level of authors in or outside your company. And through the aggregation process, you have the ability to deliver the right content to people at the right time and in the right context" (quoted in McNamara, 2005, n.p.). As communication between workers within a unit or workers in different shifts or locations is shifted from e-mail to blogs, the resulting work is more easily accessible and searchable, making it a more permanent and user-friendly communications medium. In essence, blogs become a way for individuals to narrate their work and communicate better within the company (Manjoo, 2002b). A blog today can also garner more attention

Figure 19: The Total Number of Personnel Responsible for Maintaining a Company's Corporate Blog

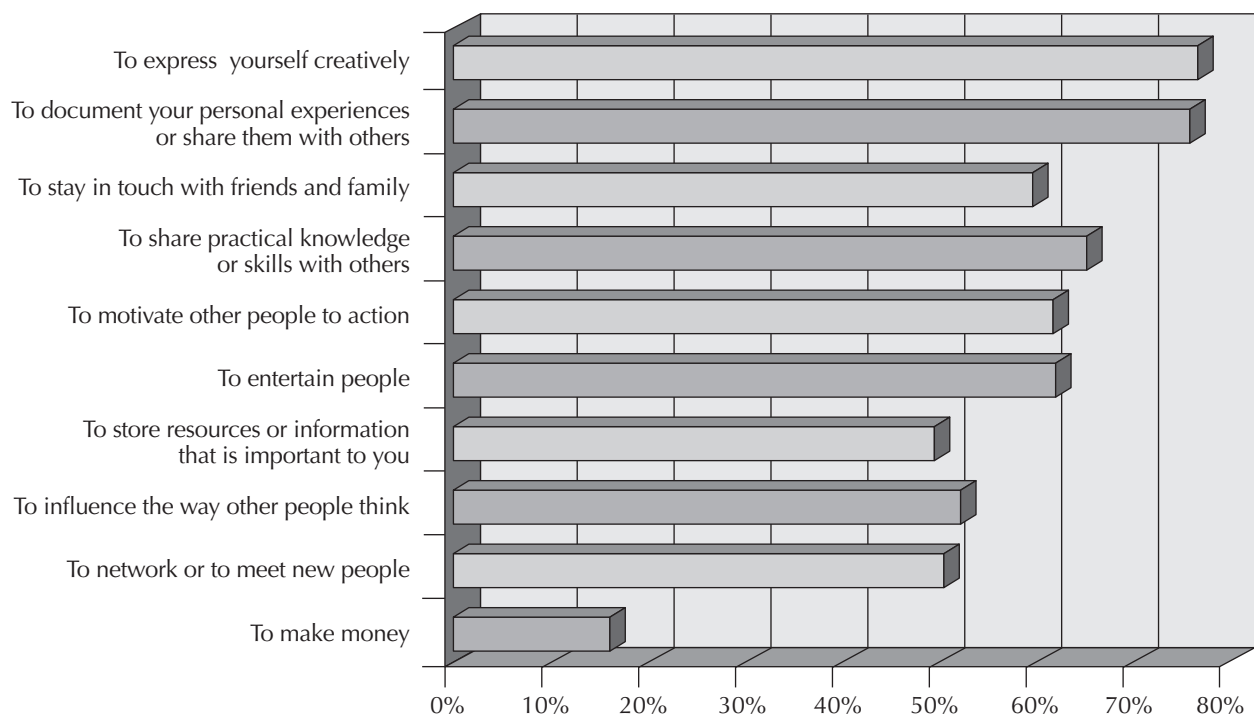


Source: Adapted from Hirsch and Nail (2006, p. 6).

than e-mail. For instance, while a corporate blog site can be looked upon as a destination site, pulling in audience, in-boxes today are jammed with both wanted and unwanted e-mails. Thus, an important corporate communication or a company newsletter can be easily lost in a sea of spam (Weil, 2004).

How can blogging help in speeding up corporate communications and elevating operational

Figure 20: CEO Views on the Benefits of Blogging



Source: eMarketer (2005c).

Table 14: Top Corporate Executives with Blogs as of April 2007 (continued on next page)

Company	Executive	Blog Site
Advanced Human Technologies	Ross Dawson, CEO	http://www.rossdawsonblog.com/
Architel	Scott Ryan, CEO	http://blog.architel.com/
Berkshire Publishing Group	Karen Christensen, CEO	www.berkshirepublishing.com/blog
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (Boston)	Paul Levy, CEO	http://runningahospital.blogspot.com/
BetterPPC	Joe Agliozzo, CEO	www.disruptivebusiness.blogspot.com/
Bluebill Advisors, Inc.	Frank Gilbane, President and CEO	www.gilbane.com/blog/
Bluehost.com	Matt Heaton, President and CEO	http://www.mattheaton.com/
Boeing Commercial Airplanes	Randy Baseler, VP of Marketing	www.boeing.com/randyl/
Burton Group	Jamie Lewis, CEO and Research Chair	http://www.burtongroupblogs.com/jamielewis/
Cheskin	Darrel Rhea, CEO	http://weblog.cheskin.net/perspectives/rhea.html
Chumby Industries	Steve Tomlin, CEO	http://chumby.wordpress.com/
Conference Calls Unlimited	Zane Safrit, CEO	http://zane.typepad.com/
Craigslist	Craig Newmark, Founder and Chairman	http://www.cnewmark.com/
Dallas Mavericks	Mark Cuban, Owner	http://www.blogmaverick.com
Edelman	Richard Edelman, President and CEO	http://www.edelman.com/speak_up/blog/
EVDB, Inc.	Brian Dear, CEO	www.brianstorms.com/
Exodus Capital Advisors	Tom O'Neill, CEO	www.buyoutblog.com
General Motors	Bob Lutz, Vice Chairman	www.fastlane.gmblogs.com
Godaddy.com	Bob Parsons, President	http://www.bobparsons.com/
Hitachi Data Systems	Hu Yoshida, CTO	http://blogs.hds.com/hu/
Homestead.com	Justin Kitch, CEO and Founder	http://ceounplugged.homestead.com/
ICP Solar	Sass Peress, President and CEO	http://www.sassperess.com/
Ipswitch, Inc.	Roger Greene, CEO	http://blogs.ipswitch.com/greene/
JetBlue Airways	David Neeleman, Founder and CEO	http://www.jetblue.com/about/ourcompany/flightlog/
Jobster	Jason Goldberg, CEO	http://jobster.blogs.com/blog_dot_jobster_dot_com/2007/01/a_ceos_blog.html
Jupitermedia	Alan Meckler, CEO	http://weblogs.jupitermedia.com/meckler/
Macmillan Publishers Ltd.	Richard Charkin, CEO	http://www.charkinblog.macmillan.com/
Mark Logic Corporation	Dave Kellogg, CEO	http://marklogic.blogspot.com/
Marriott International	Bill Marriott, Chairman and CEO	http://www.blogs.marriott.com/

Table 14: Top Corporate Executives with Blogs as of April 2007 (continued)

Company	Executive	Blog Site
N2growth	Mike Myatt, Chief Strategy Officer	http://www.n2growth.com/blog/
Nobscot	B.N. Carvin, CEO	http://nobscot.blogspot.com/
The Norwich Group	Anne Stanton, President and CEO	www.thenorwichgroup.blogs.com
Paessler	Dirk Paessler, CEO	http://www.paessler.com/blog/
PGP Corporation	Phillip M. Dunkelberger, President and CEO	http://www.pgp.com/newsroom/ceoblog/index.html
Pheedo	Bill Flitter, CEO	www.pheedo.com
Socialtext	Ross Mayfield, CEO	http://ross.typepad.com/
Spotfire	Christopher Ahlberg, CEO	http://www.spotfire.com/about/ceo_blog.cfm
The Staubach Company	Roger T. Staubach, Chairman of the Board and CEO	www.roger.staubach.com
Sun Microsystems	Jonathan Schwartz, CEO	www.blogs.sun.com/jonathan
SYNNEX	Jim Estill, CEO	http://www.jimestill.com/
Technorati	David Sifry, CEO	www.sifry.com/alerts/
Thomas Nelson Publishers	Michael S. Hyatt, President and CEO	http://michaelhyatt.blogs.com/fromwhereisit/
TSC Solutions	Jeff Dyck, CEO	http://www.tscsoftware.com/AboutUs/CEOsBlog/tabid/332/EntryID/8/Default.aspx
Unity	David Helgason, CEO and Cofounder	http://unity3d.com/blogs/david/
UserLand Software	Scott Young, President and CEO	www.scott.userland.com
Versant	Will Ruch, CEO and Managing Partner	http://www.versantblogs.com/ceo/
Wayne County Airport Authority	Lester W. Robinson, CEO	http://www.metroairport.com/Site/BlogTemplate.asp
WhatCounts	David Geller, CEO	www.whatcounts.com/companyblog/
Whole Foods Market	John Mackey, CEO	www.wholefoodsmarket.com/blogs/jm/
Wilson EduTech, Inc.	Lamarr Wilson, President	http://www.lamarrwilson.com/blog/
Windber Research Institute/ Medical Center	F. Nicholas Jacobs, President and CEO	http://windberblog.typepad.com/
Zaadz	Brian Johnson, Philosopher and CEO	http://brian.zaadz.com/blog

capacities? McNamara (2005) spotlighted the example of Stillwater National Bank in Stillwater, Oklahoma. This financial institution wanted to speed up its internal paperwork processing in its commercial loans operations. Through the use of blog technology, the bank was able to cut the documentation and review process in commercial lending dramatically, lowering the processing time from four to six

weeks to two to three days. McDonald's has begun an internal corporate blog that it believes will be the groundwork for a public blog for the company and its executives. Yet, even behind the corporate fire-wall, McDonald's believes that blogging is vital to the management of the far-flung organization today. Steve Wilson, McDonald's senior director of global web communications, observed that blogging is

viewed as an integral part of the company's management strategy, in that: "If your task is to move the culture of a company, you're not going to move it by the flip of a switch. You have to show that an open dialogue can occur, and create an ongoing dialogue to move from point A to point B" (quoted in Newcomb, 2005, n.p.). Companies like Microsoft and Sun have developed a "culture of blogging," with each having perhaps thousands of bloggers in their midst (Solheim, 2005).

Blogs have been aptly described as "primitive and esoteric"; yet, over time, we are likely to see blogs evolve into, quite simply, "the way things are done" (Panepento, 2006, n.p.). And, from the viewpoint of Mike Dover, who serves as vice president of syndicated research for New Paradigm in Toronto, "As the 'net generation moves into the workforce, they're going to expect that [social networking, blogging, forums, etc.]" (quoted in Harvey, 2007, n.p.). This means workplace issues must be addressed, along with ways of monitoring what is being said about and by employees of the organization.

Monitoring the Blogosphere

Even if some companies are hesitant about starting their own blogs, *all* organizations—public or private, for-profit or nonprofit, small or large—should care a great deal about what bloggers are saying about their firm. Instantly, a firm—and, indeed, an individual executive or manager—can come under what is often an unwarranted assault from bloggers (see the sidebar "Blogging Can Be Kryptonite"). Blake Rhodes, CEO of IceRocket, a blog services firm, squarely framed the issue by recently commenting: "If you're a business owner and you don't care about what bloggers are saying, you don't care about your business" (quoted in Branscombe, 2005, n.p.).

For a prominent company, the simple fact is that the organization is being blogged about on a daily basis, whether or not the company is engaged in any blog activity itself on a corporate basis. Take McDonald's, for instance. Its internal analysis found that in a single 90-day period in 2005, there were 675,000 blog entries made about the company by its customers, its employees, and its franchisees. Executives soon realized that in a company that serves 50 million customers on a given day, even if a service failure happens only once in a million interactions, this means that it happens 50 times each and every day

(McNamara, 2005). Such service failures are the stuff that negative blog entries are made of.

Services are already available today that will for a fee monitor the blogosphere for what is being said about you and your organization. However, there are two prominent free services that offer an easy, do-it-yourself way of monitoring blogs. Technorati (<http://www.technorati.com>) and BlogPulse (<http://www.blogpulse.com>) both offer monitoring services similar to a search engine such as Google or Yahoo. At either site, you can type in your name or your organization's name and instantly see a listing of all posts made on blogs making mention of that name—at no charge.

Employee Blogging

According to a late 2005 study conducted for *Advertising Age*, blogs cost American business greatly in lost productivity. It found that 1 in 4 American workers—approximately 35 million in all—read and write on non-job-related blogs while at work. The study found that, on average, a personal-blogging employee will spend 3.5 hours a week in such activities, making it the equivalent of a daily 40-minute blog break. Employees who blog at work have been found to do so *in addition* to their web surfing time, not in lieu of it. Thus, blogging means less working. In fact, all together, blogging has been estimated to annually cost American business the equivalent of a staggering 551,000 years of time, 4.8 billion hours of working time, and 2.3 million jobs in 2005 (Johnson, Bradley, 2005a).

The evidence is clear that blogging at work is a burgeoning activity, both for job-related and personal reasons. In fact, traffic at both blogs and advertising and media sites linked to blogs tends to spike during American daytime working hours. According to Christopher Batty, sales director for the blog-focused Gawker Media, his company's target market is "an at-work, leisure audience— a.k.a., people screwing off on the job" (quoted in Johnson, Bradley 2005b, n.p.). Blog traffic also tends to spike at times when, as McGann (2004) put it, "certain web-communicable events occur" (n.p.). Recent examples of such events include:

- Howard Dean's infamous "scream"
- Election night 2004 and 2006

Blogging Can Be Kryptonite

Why is it critical to monitor what is being said about your organization—or yourself—in the blogosphere? Ask several prominent companies, and they'll tell you tales from cyberspace that have cost them millions of dollars and perhaps unquantifiable costs to their brands and reputations.

Take Kryptonite, for example. Based in Canton, Massachusetts, the company, which makes locks for bicycles, is a subsidiary of Ingersoll-Rand. In 2004, Kryptonite found itself in the middle of a blogstorm. Bloggers posted videos showing how, using a ballpoint pen, one could easily break open a specific model of Kryptonite bicycle lock—which was true. However, bloggers also spread erroneous information that all Kryptonite locks had this vulnerability and that the company was covering up the problem. The company spent millions replacing locks and countering the negative publicity over the past year. Steven Down, Kryptonite's general manager, said from experience: "A blogger can go out and make any statement about anybody, and you can't control it. That's a difficult thing" (quoted in Lyons, 2005, n.p.).

Jeff Jarvis is a prominent blogger. In fact, his blog, the Buzz Machine (<http://www.buzzmachine.com/>) is a constant on lists of the top 100 trafficked blogs. In June 2005, he began complaining (in strong, R-rated terms) about the poor quality of his new Dell computer and the even worse service he received from the company, a condition he coined "Dell Hell." Analysis of Dell's stock price and financial performance has demonstrated that Jarvis' blogging about the company had a direct impact on the firm's financial performance and stock price. In fact, as Market Sentinel (2005) concluded, "It is clear that one person's perception of a brand, if it chimes with that of others, can materially damage that brand" (n.p.).

The packaged seafood company Gorton's came under attack by the activist group Greenpeace in March 2006. Greenpeace flamed the seafood merchant, claiming that it was linked to whale hunting in Antarctica. In fact, Nissui, the parent company of Gorton's, has a one-third ownership of the company that manages the Japanese whaling fleet that hunts in Antarctica. After a month of being attacked in the blogosphere, Nissui announced that it was selling its ownership share in the Japanese whaling operation. After winning, Greenpeace noted that, in effect, "we moused them into submission" (quoted in Parry, 2006, n.p.).

All told, the ranks of companies that have had their corporate images and brands damaged by product tales and customer service woes circulating through the blogosphere reads like a "who's who" of the Fortune 500, including firms such as Microsoft, McDonald's, Wal-Mart, and Google (Barbaro, 2006).

- The capture of Saddam Hussein
- Hurricane Katrina

Companies are increasingly concerned about the prospect of employees 'blogging off the cliff,' so to speak (McNamara, 2005, n.p.). Companies are especially concerned about employees' personal blogs and the risks that are entailed with these activities, both from a security and a securities law perspective (see the sidebar "Getting 'Dooxed' for Blogging" on page 64). Is there a need for a specifically focused blogging policy? David Carter, chief technology officer and vice president for strategy for iUpload, cautioned against being blog-specific, holding that "any code of conduct you have for communicating to the public should apply to blogging" (quoted in Burns, 2005, n.p.). However, there are unique potential legal risks that the freedom and immediacy of blogging brings:

- Exposure of trade secrets
- Trade libel
- Securities law violations
- Unauthorized use/posting of protected intellectual property

Diane Clarkson, the lead author on the recent report, "Content Technologies: Identifying Marketing Potential of Corporate Blogs, Podcasts, and RSS/XML Feeds," commented that in today's legal and investing environment, the risk is indeed great for companies: "It's very, very easy to have good intentions and inadvertently say something that could expose a publicly traded company to some issues around security fraud, for example. All you have to do is make one material statement" (quoted in Vaas, 2005, n.p.).

Getting 'Dooiced' for Blogging

What does getting "Dooiced" mean? Well, in the blogosphere, this is the term used when workers are fired by their employer for their blogging activities. The origin of the phrase comes from Heather Armstrong, who blogs under the pseudonym "Dooce" online at (<http://www.dooce.com>). In 2002, Armstrong was fired from her job as a web designer for discussing her co-workers and satirizing her employer in her personal blog. A number of high-profile cases in which employees have been fired for their blogging activities include anonymous employees at Starbucks, Microsoft, and even Harvard University. The following are some of the more publicized cases:

- **Delta Air Lines.** A flight attendant, Ellen Simonetti, contended that she was suspended and then fired after she was discovered to have posted pictures of herself wearing her uniform on her personal blog. Subsequently, the woman filed a sexual discrimination complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), contending that the airline had not fired men for similar conduct (Graybow, 2005).
- **Wells Fargo.** In 2002, after David Corby complained on his personal blog about a department policy that mandated that all employees wear American flag pins to show support for the victims of the September 11, 2001, attacks, he was fired from the bank (Wyld, 2006).
- **The Houston Chronicle.** The newspaper fired Steve Olafson, a seven-year veteran political reporter, because his editors felt that his personal blog, which contained poking criticisms of some of the politicians he covered, compromised his ability to be an objective journalist in his "day job" (Gallo, 2004).
- **Google.** The company fired Mark Jen for blogging about life inside the firm, not for being critical but for being too open about life inside the fast-growing company (Utter, 2005).
- **Friendster.** Joyce Park (aka "Troutgirl" on her personal blog) was fired from Friendster because she discussed the rationale behind the company's technology conversion from J2EE to PHP on her blog (Caslon Analytics, 2006).
- **Waterstones.** In the United Kingdom, Joe Gordon was fired after criticizing the firm on his personal blog (Tench, 2005).

According to Lewis Maltby, president of the National Workrights Institute in Princeton, New Jersey, at present, "If your boss should see your blog and be offended by something there, you have virtually no protection against being fired" (quoted in Gilbert, 2005, n.p.). As the courts begin to consider cases of employees fired for what they say and do on their personal blogs in reference to their employers, management should strive to stay informed on developments in this area. According to Paul Arne, co-chairman of the technology group at law firm Morris Manning & Martin LLP, "There's very, very little case law at this point" (quoted in Graybow, 2005, n.p.).

The public sector is not immune from the "Dooicing" phenomenon. Recent examples include:

- **The CIA.** Christine Axsmith, a software tester working for BAE Systems, was terminated in July 2006 for posts she made to Intelink. Posting under the pseudonym "Covert Communications," or "CC" for short, Axsmith, who liked to think of herself as "the Erma Bombeck of the intel world," was fired and her security clearance revoked for posts she made on the internal blog. While she routinely posted on such things as the food in the CIA commissary, what got her fired were posts she made regarding the use of torture on prisoners in Iraq and the Geneva Conventions (Priest, 2006).
- **The Commonwealth of Virginia.** The Virginia Department of Business Assistance suspended Will Vehrs, a business services manager for the agency in Richmond, for 10 days without pay for blogging on agency time in April 2006. Vehrs, who blogged on his own private conservative blog and on blogs of area papers, was suspended for submitting 34 suggested captions to a photo caption contest between 12:51 p.m. and 3:40 p.m. on a workday from his office computer (Whitley, 2006). Delegate Chris Saxman defended Vehrs, stating: "Honestly, if every time a state employee takes a cigarette break and says something negative about their job, vents, makes a joke, will they be called out and asked to resign? How do we expect our employees to perform if we intend on overpoliticizing a blog post? It was not anonymous. It was a joke. It was wrong. The man has apologized. Let it go" (opinion cited in Glover, 2006g, n.p.).

Blogging Policy

For all these collective reasons, organizations today would be well advised to establish a blogging policy. It is imperative that such corporate policies specifically spell out what can and can't be said by employees and executives in blogs on corporate sites. The blogging policy should also go further to establish ground rules for employee comments about the firm and its clients, customers, suppliers, and so on, on their own personal blogs.

There will likely be an intense focus on the need for blogging policies in government as well, both for employees and for elected representatives. Surveys have consistently found that organizations are severely behind the technology curve in developing corporate and organizational policies to deal with blogging activities (Sarkar, 2005). This is an area that all organizations should look at; a good place to start is to benchmark the policies of leading organizations and then adapt them to your particular situation.

A good example of such is the IBM corporate blogging guidelines (IBM, 2005), which were developed internally through a wiki involving bloggers within IBM (available at <http://www.ibm.com/blogs/zz/en/guidelines.html>). Other prominent organizations that have published blogging guidelines for their organizations and employees include:

- Harvard Law School (2007): <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/home/terms-of-use>
- Hill & Knowlton (2005): <http://blogs.hillandknowlton.com/blogs/niallcook/archive/2005/05/19/279.aspx>.
- Sun Microsystems (2007): <http://www.sun.com/aboutsun/media/blogs/BloggingGuidelines.pdf>
- Thomas Nelson (2007): <http://blogs.thomasnelson.com/pages/BloggingGuidelines.htm>.

Bev Godwin of USA.gov recently stated: "Some rules about government information apply to blogs as they would for any information the government distributes." At present, however, "there are no government-wide, blog-specific rules" (quoted in Sternstein, 2006, n.p.). Certainly, as rules are inevitably developed, provisions will have to be made to allow for comments on blogs on federal sites

(currently this is prohibited, leading members of Congress to engage in blogging on external sites where commenting is allowed) (Terdiman, 2006).

Finally, we have already seen the first cases of employees being fired or severely punished for their blogging activities at work. These have occurred in both the private and public sectors, due to employees' blogs and blog comments on both personal and organizational sites (see the sidebar "Getting 'Dooiced' for Blogging").

Conclusion

In *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams (2006) propose that we are seeing the development of a new economic model whereby the whole notion of organizations and companies may be being revised and upended by mass collaboration capabilities. Using the wiki model that underlies Wikipedia, permanent, temporary, or one-time collaboration between individuals and companies of all sizes, outside the boundaries of traditional hierarchies and located anywhere on the planet, can join forces to produce content, goods, and services.

Wikis, blogs, video, and audio files that can be distributed for free in seconds to millions—these collaborative tools may make possible a future that one observer has noted “will require the greatest change in management thinking since the likes of General Motors invented the corporation in the early 20th century” (Maney, 2006, n.p.). What we may indeed be seeing is the birth of a whole new management style: “management by blogging.” In fact, Rich Marcello, a blogging senior vice president for HP, views his own blog, read widely by both HP employees and interested observers, as a way of promoting a better relationship between management and employees. Marcello recently observed: “A lot of the traditional Management 101 you might have read 10 years ago doesn’t apply anymore. Today, it’s much more about leading in a way that’s a good balance between who you are as a person and what you’re doing at work, showing that you’re just as comfortable dealing with poetry as with profit and loss” (quoted in Larson, 2005, n.p.).

Noted management guru Tom Peters (2001) advocated that all executives, whether in the private or public sector, practice MBWA, or “managing by

wandering around,” as a key to leadership excellence. When this idea was proposed in the 1980s, wandering meant physically being someplace—a factory floor, a store, a cafeteria, a distribution center, or an employee or constituent’s office. Fast forward two decades to today. More and more, as one wanders around the local coffeehouse, the local university, the park, city streets, or your own offices, we see living proof that more and more of our lives are being spent online. Thus, to be an effective leader today, we must wander online.

And now, with the advent of a whole host of technological advances, we are not just surfing the web, we are engaging it. We can create and control our own content through user-generated media technologies, which allow us to do so without sophisticated computer programming knowledge. In fact, it only takes one finger at a time to type, and typing is the foundation of blogging, the foremost technology of what is being hailed as the “Web 2.0 revolution.” By exercising our fingers and our minds, blogging will provide unique opportunities for promoting engagement and “managing by wandering around” in the digital age.

Part III: Future Research on Public Sector Blogging

Directions for Future Research

Blogging Research Overview

The evolution of the Web 2.0 phenomenon will be of intense research interest as it takes shape over the next decade. As Paul Saffo, founder and director of the Institute for the Future, noted: “In the early stage of any revolution, power goes to the people, but as it matures, those in power grab it back. That’s what happened with the Internet” (opinion cited in Kornblum, 2006, n.p.).

Specifically, as the blogging trend develops, there will be ample opportunities for research into how this phenomenon impacts a wide variety of communications and practices. One example of such is Wyld (2006), who examined the state of blogging among college and university presidents and chancellors. From an organizational communications and management perspective, there will be opportunities for research into how blogging impacts the effectiveness of both private and public sector executives in areas such as communications effectiveness and knowledge management. There will be specific opportunities for communications researchers to examine the use of blogging, both versus and in tandem with other means of communications, with audiences internal to and outside of the organization. In the public sector realm, there will be opportunities to examine specifically how public executives use blogs in ways similar to and in contrast with leaders in for-profit and nonprofit organizations.

Further, in the specific case of elected officials, there will be opportunities to study officeholders’ use of blogging as a means of staying in touch with their constituencies, looking at the overall trends of the practice and, through case study approaches, at best practice leaders and innovators. With elected officeholders, there will be opportunities to examine the subjects about which they blog and the frequencies of their blogging activities, as well as the interest and

feedback generated by such. There also will be opportunities to examine elected officials’ use of campaign blogs versus official office blogs, which are of necessity distinct and different. There will be opportunities to measure the “outcomes” of blogging for public officials in terms of outcome measures such as their popularity ranking in polls, effectiveness ratings, and, ultimately, their ability to be re-elected. In both public and private enterprises, there will be opportunities to map and measure the viral nature of blogging to understand how leaders can influence others in their organizations not only to engage in blogging, but also to make use of tools such as RSS and podcasting. Finally, it has been predicted that best practices for organizational blogs will evolve over time (Payne, 2003). This will be an area of intense interest, as there will be a ready audience for practical answers to the questions of highly placed officials who will want to know how and why they should engage in this new medium. In short, because this is a communications practice and technology in its infancy, there will be vast opportunities for important and interesting research to be carried out over the next decade.

The ROI of Blogging

What is the return on investment, or ROI, of blogging for public sector executives and organizations? Holloway (2007) observed that even from a corporate perspective, blogging’s ROI is “less straightforward” than the ROI of traditional marketing techniques, which, he added, is quite “un-straightforward.” However, it has been demonstrated that a well-formatted, frequently updated, and informative blog will:

- Generate buzz and interest
- Encourage repeat visits to the blog and associated websites
- Increase page ranks with the major search engines

For public sector organizations and lead officials, the ROI calculation from blogging can be even more indirect and incalculable. With a for-profit company, blogging can be seen as producing direct, tangible results (i.e., increased traffic to the corporate website, RSS and other subscriptions to updates of the site and the associated executive blogs) and making indirect improvements in corporate image and/or personal reputations, company and brand awareness, and even product sales and service utilization levels. Even with a nonprofit organization, many of the same visibility and awareness measures could be applied, with contributions and fund-raising serving as the proxy for sales results. In the public sector, bright lines can be drawn between blogging metrics for the campaign blogs of officials and the blogs they use as they administer their area or agency. Lenhart and Fox (2006) suggest using what they term “on-blog” and “off-blog” metrics for assessing the amount of attention being garnered by a blog. The former category includes the number of comments made on a specific blog post and the postings made on the blog’s tagboard (which is a general space that is available for viewers to comment on the entire blog or website). Off-blog metrics may include all mentions of the blog outside of the blog itself, including:

- News articles or stories regarding the blog in any media outlet (or on another blog or website)
- E-mails about the blog and the forwarding of blog posts
- Conversations about the blog

While campaign blogs have an ultimate metric for success (election), blogs used in public administration have less defined ROI metrics. Certainly, discussions about ROI must always include “soft” aspects like:

- Did blogging bring personal satisfaction to the official?
- Did blogging enable the official to get insightful comments and timely feedback from constituents?
- Did blogging contribute to the official’s decisions to remain (or retire) from office?

Insights on these soft metrics can be garnered only through intensive surveys and/or interviews with the blogging public officials, with comparisons to be

drawn from their non-blogging brethren in similar positions. Through such research, the specific factors that may motivate an official to begin a blog could be delineated and, conversely, the factors that may lead one to blog less frequently or to discontinue the blog entirely. Finally, consider the case of the British city of Ampthill, where (as noted in Table 5 on page 24) the current mayor, Penny Foster, is continuing to blog, following the lead of her direct predecessor, Mark Smith. As instances of “successor blogging” occur, it will be interesting to investigate both the motivations behind the official’s continuing the practice and the expectations and reactions of citizens and public workers.

Blogging Behavior Research

Going forward, it will also be interesting to see applied, analytical research conducted on the blogging behaviors of public officials. Such longitudinal research could examine the blogging behaviors of public officials in quantifiable terms, such as:

- Frequency of their posting activities
- Average number of days between posts
- Topics covered in posts (personal, travel, news, and issues)
- Comments allowed (yes/no) and number of comments
- Number of links to the blog posts of the official
- Amount (if any) of video/audio content posted
- Official versus personal blogging activities

It would be interesting to then compare the blogging behaviors of public officials at similar levels of government (for example, congresspersons, state legislators, and mayors) and among different ranks of public officials. One could develop a variety of hypotheses that seek to study the blogging behaviors of the public official in relation to characteristics such as:

- Rank of the official
- Size of the constituency population
- Demographic characteristics of the population
- Internet usage and blogging behaviors of the population

Finally, over time, it will be interesting to compare both the penetration of blogging in general and the blogging behaviors and perceptions of public officials with comparable groups. Since this is a global phenomenon, one can envision research projects comparing blogging between different countries (for example, members of Parliament in the United Kingdom with members of the U.S. Congress; mayors of cities of comparable size in the U.S. with those in other countries). Other projects could compare the blogging penetration and blogging activities of top officials in the public versus private sectors. For instance, in comparing members of Congress and Fortune 500 CEOs, which group blogs more, who blogs more often, who uses trackbacks and pings, and who responds to readers' comments?

As can be seen, many interesting studies on blogging and the use of other Web 2.0 forums and tools can be conducted in the coming years by university researchers, consulting firms, and independent researchers, such as the Pew Internet & American Life Project. What will emerge from their work will be snapshots that will evolve into a mosaic of how these new tools are being used to foster better communication and new methods of online engagement between public officials and the governed, who are themselves increasingly living online lives. Such research will provide critical feedback for those making personal decisions on whether to engage in blogging and help in setting blog strategies for both their organization and themselves.

We also will see research on how blogs and other Web 2.0 tools are being increasingly integrated into organizational homepages, as the line between what is a blog and what is a homepage quickly begins to blur. As the penetration of text, audio, and video blogging elements increases, we may well see the distinction between blog and homepage disappear, resulting in one site.

Payne (2003) foresees that best practices for corporate, executive, and public official blogs will evolve over time. She believes that the innate tension between legal and business concerns and the desire of the blogger to be authentic will prevent business blogs from truly matching the freewheeling, raw, and personal style of individual blogs. Thus the challenge will be to keep the freshness and authenticity of blogging while maintaining corporate propriety.

Peter Fader of the Wharton School of Business predicts that a rating system for blogs will soon emerge. In the marketplace of ideas, Fader sees the blogging community self-policing credible versus non-credible blogs and bloggers based on a system operating much like the eBay community's rating system for buyer and sellers (op. cited in Knowledge@Wharton, 2005).

Appendix: Glossary of Terms Used in Blogging and Web 2.0

Above the fold: The content on a blog that can be read by the viewer without having to scroll down in the open window. This term is borrowed from newspaper terminology.

Aggregator: Software that pulls information from various web feeds that you have selected and displays any updates made to them, using RSS. Aggregators make it possible to have updated content automatically downloaded for viewing in a web browser, without having to view the source website. Popular aggregators include Feed Reader, Feed Demon, Bloglines, Newsgator, and Rojo. Also known as a newsreader.

A-Lister: The top rung of bloggers who command the largest audiences and generally carry the most clout in the blogosphere.

Anonoblog: A blog maintained by an anonymous author, often under a pseudonym. Also referred to as an anyoblog, a faux blog, and a ghostblog. It is a portmanteau of “anonymous” and “blog.”

Archives: A collection of all posts on a blog, categorized by month, topic, author, etc.

Astroturf marketing: An attempt to artificially create grassroots buzz for a company’s product or service. Astroturf marketing has a negative connotation, primarily because of the deceptive tactics used. Some large companies have run into trouble for such astroturf marketing efforts, including Wal-Mart (for having created a fake blog, “Wal-Marting Across America,” which was supposedly created by a man and a woman traveling the country in an RV and staying in Wal-Mart parking lots, but turned out to have been blogged by their public relations firm) and Dr Pepper/Seven Up (for having its public

relations firm create a fake blog, called “Pasteurize This,” to promote a new milk-flavored drink called “Raging Cow,” following the adventures of a fictitious cow criss-crossing America).

Atom: A type of web feed, written in XML (Extensible Markup Language), which allows a user to download any updates made to the website or blog using a feed reader. Information on Atom can be found at <http://atomenabled.org/>.

Audioblog: A blog where the blogger posts recordings of voice, music, or other audio content, often with textual annotation, in order to identify the content for indexing. Also referred to as an MP3 blog or musicblog.

Autocasting: An automated form of podcasting that allows bloggers and blog readers to generate audio versions of text-only blogs from RSS feeds.

Blacklist: A list of URLs that have been identified as spam URLs; these sites are eliminated (or “black-listed”) from comments and trackbacks on a blog.

Blargon: A term coined by William Safire that encompasses the lingo of blogging. It is a portmanteau of “blog” and “jargon.”

Blaudience: The audience, or readership, of a blog. It is a portmanteau of “blog” and “audience.”

Blawg: A blog about the law, most often written by a lawyer, law school professor or student, or law review. It is a portmanteau of “blog” and “law.”

Bleg: The practice of writing a blog entry or comment for the sole purpose of asking the readers for

something (ideas, e-mails, donations, commentary, etc.). Doing so is referred to as “blegging.”

Blego: Bloggers who write as a means of promoting their own self-worth. It is a portmanteau of “blog” and “ego.”

Blog: An online journal that can be updated regularly, with entries typically displayed in chronological order. While blogs now encompass not only text but video and audio as well, it is generally accepted that if the individual posts/items/articles that cannot be linked to separately via a permalink (rather than just linking to the whole site), then the site in question is not a blog. Also referred to as a weblog or web log, with “blog” actually being the short form of these terms. “Blog” is also a verb, meaning to write an article on such an online journal.

Blog ecosystem: The ability to map the relationships between different blogs online, similar to mapping trophic levels or interrelationships in nature.

Bloggerati: People who are sophisticated in operating blogs. It is a portmanteau of “blog” and “literati.”

Blogfolio: An online journal created to display the author’s or creator’s work, including an author’s multiple blogs.

Blogfriend: Someone you know and consider a friend solely through reading and interacting with his or her blog. It is a portmanteau of “blog” and “friend.”

Bloggable: Describes an item worthy of being posted on a blog.

Blogger: The person who writes and/or maintains the blog. It is the truncated name for weblogger.

Bloggng: To maintain a blog by posting text, links, images, or other content, often using blogging software.

Blog hopping: The practice of moving from one blog after another to read the entries and/or to leave comments, with related side trips to various articles, sites, discussion forums, etc.

Blogiday: A holiday from blogging, a day when you don’t blog.

Blogiversary: The birthday of one’s blog.

Blogoneer: A blogger who engages in the practice with an expert or pioneering attitude. It is a portmanteau of “blog” and “pioneer.”

Blogorhhea: A blog on which the blogger engages in an overly verbose and excessively wordy posting style. Often such a blog appears to be written in an unedited, stream-of-consciousness style. It is a portmanteau of “blog” and “diarrhea.”

Blogorific: Describes something that is pleasant or agreeable to the blogger. Another spelling is “blogerific.” It is a portmanteau of “blog” and “terrific.”

Blogroll: A list of links to other blogs or websites made by the author of the blog. These tend to have similarities to the original blog and/or be favorites of the blog’s author. The blogroll generally is placed as a sidebar on the blog.

Blogsit: The practice of maintaining and/or publishing entries to a blog temporarily for the blog’s owner while he or she is away or taking a hiatus from blogging.

Blog site: The web address (URL, or Uniform Resource Locator) of a blog. This blog site may be a dedicated domain, a sub-domain, or embedded within a larger website.

Blogsnob: Bloggers who refuse to respond to comments on their blog from people outside their immediate circle.

Blogstorm: An instance when a large amount of activity, information, and opinion erupts around a particular subject or controversy in the blogosphere. Also referred to as a “blog swarm.” Oftentimes, blogstorms entail others going after (and, in many cases, attacking) a particular company or person who has done something that is perceived to be particularly egregious in the mind of the blogger. Perhaps the most well-known blogstorm to date involved Vincent Ferrari and AOL. When Ferrari became upset over how his attempts to cancel his AOL account were thwarted at every turn, he released his tape-recorded conversation with an AOL customer service representative. This instigated a blogstorm in which many other bloggers and consumers swarmed AOL.

Blogvertisement: Either an advertisement placed by a blogger or an advertisement listed, or solely shown, on blogs. A popular form of blogvertisement is contextual ads such as Google's AdSense and BlogAds. It is a portmanteau of "blog" and "advertisement."

Blogger: A blogger who exhibits adolescent tendencies and lacks basic social graces or good manners. It is a portmanteau of "blog" and "booger."

Blook: A book that has been created from a blog.

Blurker: A person who reads many blogs but makes no comments, thereby leaving no evidence of his or her presence.

Boreblogging: The practice of writing on a blog about personal matters that are barely interesting, even to the writer.

CAPTCHA: The acronym for "Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart." This is the technology that generates random words and letters that a user must type in when carrying out a variety of functions online, such as making reservations, buying tickets, and today, in many cases, making comments on a blog. A common type of CAPTCHA requires that the user type the letters of a distorted image, sometimes with the addition of an obscured sequence of letters or digits that appears on the screen. The CAPTCHA verification is done to ensure that it is a real person online and not a spambot. The technology was developed by Carnegie Mellon University and IBM.

Carpetbombing: The practice of commenting anonymously in blogs.

Categories: A method of organizing blog entries by assigning each entry to a predetermined topic. Each topic (category) will link to a list of entries, all with related content.

Celeblog: A blog focused on a celebrity. These blogs typically detail the lives of movie stars, musicians, and other celebrities, much like tabloid magazines, often featuring embarrassing or revealing paparazzi photos.

Celebriblog: A blog maintained by a celebrity.

Comment: A response left on the author's blog regarding one of his or her blog entries or posts.

Commentariat: The commenters on a particular blog. The term has alternately been applied to the blogosphere as a whole.

Commenter: A person who posts a comment on a blog.

Comment spam: The blog equivalent of spam. Specifically, the term refers to a comment that has nothing at all to do with the content of the blog entry on which the comment is made. Most often, these off-topic comments contain links to promote a product or service (quite often to sites associated with pornography, gambling, erectile dysfunction drugs, etc.). Most comment spam is automatically entered by spambots, rather than by real people.

Consumer Generated Media (CGM): An umbrella term encompassing a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated, and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues. CGM includes, but is not limited to, consumer-to-consumer e-mail, postings on public Internet discussion boards and forums, consumer ratings websites or forums, blogs, moblogs, social networking sites, personally made videos and audio files, and individual websites.

Corporate blogs: Blogs that are created and sponsored by corporate entities. These blogs provide postings from employees of the organization delivering information and insight relating to the company, its products, and issues that impact the company. Most allow users to post comments, since this provides valuable feedback and a means for open discussion between the company and its consumers. Also referred to as a "business blog" or "biz blog."

Dark blog: A blog that is unavailable to the public, often hidden behind a firewall or registration barrier.

Dashboard: The first screen that is seen when one logs in to a blogging software program, with the controls, tools, and functions needed to create, maintain, and update the blog.

Del.icio.us: A social bookmarking service (available at <http://del.icio.us/>) that allows users to share their bookmarked sites with others. When used as a verb (to del.icio.us someone), it means that you have added them to your del.icio.us bookmarks.

Dooiced: To be fired from your job for a posting you made on your blog. The term is credited to Heather B. Armstrong, who was fired for satirical postings about her employer and her co-workers that she made to her blog at <http://www.dooce.com>. “To dooce” someone would mean to fire them.

Entry: Each individual post made on a blog.

Fisk: The practice of deconstructing an article on a point-by-point, highly critical basis. The term is derived from the name of British journalist Robert Fisk, a frequent target of such critical articles in the blogosphere. To be “fisked” would mean to be the victim of such a deconstruction.

Flame: To make a hostile, intemperate remark on a blog, usually of a personal nature. “Flaming” is to engage in this practice.

Flog: A false blog (the word is a portmanteau of “fake” and “blog”), created by a public relations firm or a corporate marketing unit to promote a service, product, or brand. Astroturfing is the practice of creating such flogs.

Froglogs: Francophone blogs.

Ghost blog: A blog that is run and managed by an anonymous author(s). A ghost blog can also be a blog written by a company or person on behalf of another company or person.

Group blog: A blog that has more than one regular contributing writer. Also referred to as a “group-blog.”

HTML: The acronym for Hyper Text Markup Language, which is the language used to construct a web page.

Hyperaggregation: Software services that aggregate information from other websites (that are themselves aggregators of websites, blogs, photo and video-sharing sites, etc.) into one central dashboard from which

to be updated on developments of interest to the user. Examples of hyperaggregators include Doggdot.us (<http://www.doggdot.us/>), Original Signal (<http://web20.originalsignal.com>), Popurls (<http://www.popurls.com>), Spokeo (<http://www.spokeo.com/>), and Viral Videos (<http://www.viralvideos.com>).

Journal blog: A personal, diary-like blog. Journal blogs are the most common type of blog by far, but most have extremely small, yet often very loyal, daily readerships.

K-log: Usually an internal blog (i.e., on an intranet and not visible to the general public outside an organization). They are used for purposes of internal company communication, project management, and/or knowledge management. Also referred to as a “knowledge log,” “Klog,” “K-blog,” or “knowledge blog.”

Klogger: Someone who blogs on a k-log.

Linklog: A blog that consists simply of links to websites/blogs of interest to the blog’s author.

Meme: A website, video, band, concept, etc., that suddenly becomes popular due to a number of bloggers posting about it. Also known as an Internet phenomenon.

Milblog: A blog on the war in the Middle East, written by soldiers or battlefield journalists.

Misting: The practice by which a blogger tries to refute the views of another. It is similar to a fisk or fisking, but misting is typically done in a less aggressive manner and usually in a humorous way.

Meta-blogging: The practice of writing blogs or making blog posts about blogging and/or the blogosphere in general.

Moblog: A blog that is updated primarily from a mobile device, and generally (but not always) while the author is on the road or traveling. Moblogs are usually photo and video rich, rather than text intensive. Moblogs are generally run from a phone, but they can also be run from a laptop or web-enabled PDA; the defining element of a moblog is that it is used to “blog away from the desk.” It is a portmanteau of “mobile” and “blog.”

Mothball: To stop regularly posting to one's blog and archive the blog for posterity.

MSM: Acronym for the so-called mainstream media, which encompasses newspapers, magazines, and major network television. Also referred to as the "old media," "conventional media," "dead-tree media," and "mediasphere."

Perl: The acronym for Practical Extraction and Report Language, a programming language that is used by some types of blogware for processing text.

Permalink: Because a blog's front page changes regularly, older posts will eventually "fall off" the front page and be placed into the blog's archives. In order to make it easier to link back to old posts, each single post on a blog is given its own unique URL. By using a permalink, any person (including the blog's author) can link to a specific post on a blog, rather than to the most recently updated page of a blog.

Photoblogging: A blog that predominantly consists of photographs and images.

Photoblogger: A person who creates and maintains a photoblog.

PHP: The acronym for Hypertext Preprocessor, which is an HTML-embedded scripting language that allows the creation of dynamic web pages, used by some types of blogware.

Ping: The alert in the TrackBack system that notifies the original poster of a blog post when someone writes an entry concerning the original post. The word "ping" is actually an acronym for "Packet INternet Grouper."

Podcast: A podcast is an audio file, usually in MP3 (MPEG-1 Audio Layer 3) format, that can be downloaded and listened to on any compatible audio device, such as an iPod, MP3 player, iTunes, or Windows Media Player. The term "podcast" is derived from the iPod, the popular portable media player made by Apple. To post a podcast is referred to as "podcasting."

Political blog: A blog containing mainly politically oriented material. Also referred to as a "plog."

Post: A single unit of content on a blog, usually consisting of at least a title and text. A blog is composed of a collection of posts (or entries). The term also can be used as a verb, meaning to publish such an individual blog entry.

RSS: The initials used to refer to the following standards: "Really Simple Syndication," "Rich Site Summary," and "RDF Site Summary." This family of web feed formats is used to publish frequently updated digital content, such as blogs, news feeds, or podcasts. Users of RSS content use programs called feed "readers" or "aggregators." The user subscribes to a feed by supplying to their reader a link to the feed, and the reader can then check the user's subscribed feeds to see if any of those feeds have new content since the last time it checked, and, if so, retrieve that content and present it to the user. RSS delivers its information as an XML file called an "RSS feed," "webfeed," "RSS stream," or "RSS channel." Such syndicated content can include, but is by no means limited to, data such as news feeds, blog postings and/or comments, events listings, news stories, headlines, project updates, excerpts from discussion forums, or even corporate information. RSS was originally developed by Netscape.

Shocklog: A blog that is intended to produce shocking discussions by posting various forms of shocking content.

Sidebar: One or more columns that appear on one or both sides of the main page of most blogs. These are usually used to display links, contact information, archives, photos, etc.

Sideblog: A smaller blog usually placed in the sidebar of a blog.

Skins: A set of pre-designed templates for a blog that allows users to give their blog a customized design but make use of predetermined choices of images, fonts, layouts, etc.

Social Networking Site (SNS): A website that provides a forum for individuals to exchange opinions, create personal profiles, and receive and/or initiate direct interaction with peers. Members communicate by voice, chat, instant message, videoconference, and blogs, and the service typically provides a way for members to contact friends of other members.

The SNS is the 21st century term for “virtual community,” a group of people who use the Internet to communicate with each other about anything and everything. Popular social networking sites include Friendster (<http://www.friendster.com>), MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com>), Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>), Classmates.com (<http://www.classmates.com>), and Xanga (<http://www.xanga.com>). Video sharing sites such as YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>) and photo sharing services such as Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com>) are also considered to fall under the domain of social networking sites.

SOVO: The acronym for Silent Online Video Object. SOVO refers to the practice of using a video clip(s) in a blog or other online environment, where a print publication would instead use a still photograph.

Spam blog: A blog that is composed of spam. Or it can refer to comments that are composed of nonsensical text that are automatically generated in an attempt to clog blogs and/or to game search engines for higher rankings. Also referred to as “splogs” or “zombie blogs.”

Spambot: Online code that automatically generates large numbers of unwanted messages and directs them at the comment sections of public blogs, creating large numbers of unwanted and unsolicited comments. A spambot can enter hundreds of unwanted spam comments in a matter of minutes. To guard against spambots and comment spam, some bloggers and blog services will exclude comments per se, restrict particular users and addresses from commenting, or require registration in order to make comments.

Sping: A ping that is sent from a spam blog to make recipients think content of interest has been updated on a site of interest and/or that they have subscribed to via RSS.

Template: The blog presentation design.

Thread: A series of posts on a specific topic in a blog.

Thread drift: What happens when off-topic posts in a thread devoted to a specific topic take the conversation off course.

TrackBack: The system that allows a blogger to see who has seen his or her original post and has written

another entry concerning it. The system works by sending a “ping” between the blogs, thereby providing the alert.

TrackBack Ping: The ping that signals a blog’s server that a post on that blog has had a comment entered on it.

Troll: Someone who leaves comments on a blog solely to antagonize the blog’s author. “Trolling” is the practice of doing so.

Vlogger: A person engaged in vlogging (see next entry).

Vlogging: The practice of adding video to a written blog or, alternatively, creating a blog that is composed mainly of videos. Also referred to as “video blogging” or shortened to “vlog” or “vblog.”

Vorage: The practice of searching for video online and sharing it with others. It is a portmanteau of “video” and “forage.”

Warblog: A blog focused on war in the Middle East. Warblogs that are written by soldiers or battlefield journalists are commonly referred to as “milblogs.”

Web 2.0: According to Tim O’Reilly, founder of O’Reilly Media and the originator of the Web 2.0 concept: “Web 2.0 is the business revolution in the computer industry caused by the move to the Internet as platform, and an attempt to understand the rules for success on that new platform. Chief among those rules is this: Build applications that harness network effects to get better the more people use them.”

Wiki: From the Hawaiian term for “quick,” this type of website allows readers to edit and contribute to it. It is an open, collaborative site on the web, which may be publicly available (as in the best known wiki, Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>)) or, alternatively, may be a wiki on an intranet or limited to invited users. In the latter case, the wiki can be used by organizations as an internal collaborative tool for knowledge and information exchange.

XML: The abbreviation for Extensible Markup Language, a scripting language commonly used for blog feeds.

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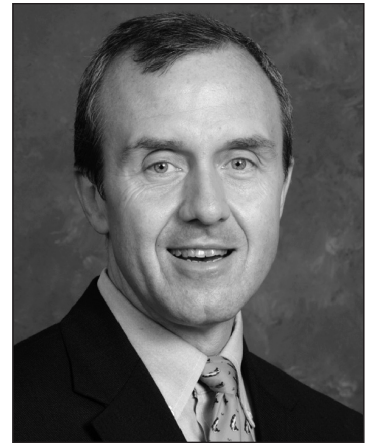
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