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Atividade 7 – System Information text genres

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Email Conventions

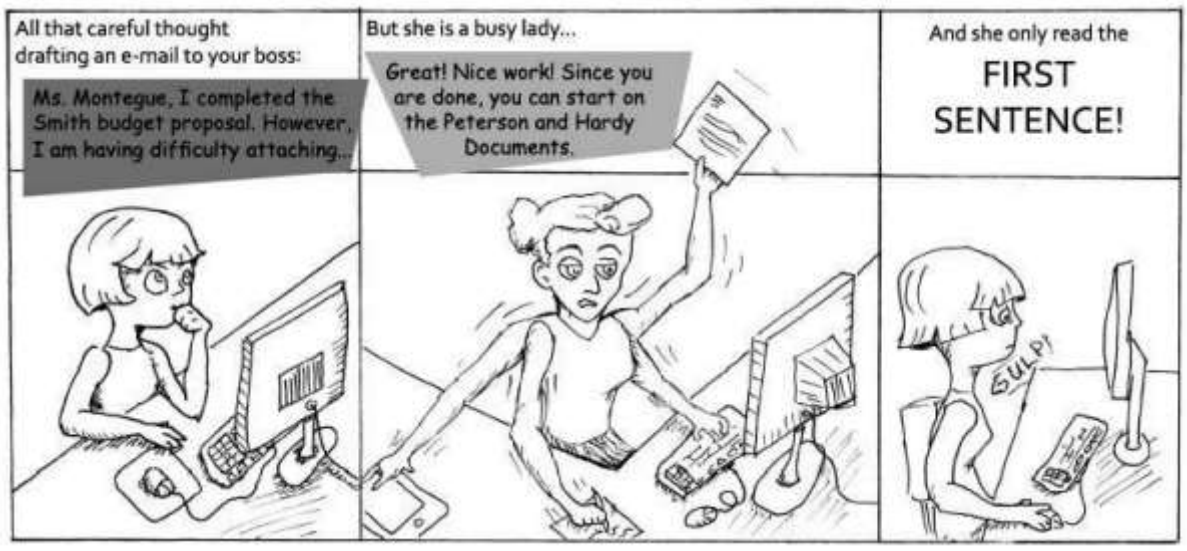
Email is the most commonly used workplace genre because the messages are quick, save paper costs, and maintain records of communications. Their features make them the most practical genre for typical low-stakes communication.

Features of an email

- electronic format—inexpensive and easy to distribute
- variable audiences—you can send to individuals or groups of any size
- subject line—readers can decide to read or delete without opening
- automatic record keeping—email systems record all emails (remember to be professional at all times)
- allows for attachments—you can distribute longer, more detailed documents
- allows for links—you can connect readers with more detailed information.

Be careful to include full links rather than hyperlinks because emails set to plain-text formatting will strip away hyperlinks. A full link can be copied and pasted into a browser even if the link itself has been removed. Additionally, be sure to follow-up on emails that include links because links can increase the chances of your email being directed to the junk folder.

Emails are also the genre where the most miscommunications occur because readers read them very quickly. They often reply to emails as soon as they think they know what you're saying or asking in order to efficiently handle the volume of emails coming in. For this reason, make sure to carefully construct your emails, especially considering that readers may skim or stop before the end.



The comic illustrates this effect in action. Because the boss is so busy, she stops reading after the first sentence, "I completed the Smith budget proposal" because she thinks she knows what will follow. By trying to read efficiently, she misses the fact that there is a problem. Writers should keep in mind that many readers will make assumptions and take shortcuts to save time.

To support readers in effectively reading an email, you should:

- Write a clear, descriptive subject line that encourages the recipients to open and read it.
- Make the overall purpose and message of the email clear in the first couple of sentences.
- Break the email into extra-small, manageable chunks to support effective skimming.
- Keep the email short and concise so it can be read quickly.
- Limit your formatting because it doesn't always transfer well, e.g. odd line breaks and list formatting disappearing.
- Make sure you remember to proofread.
- Verify you have included all attachments

Fonte: NewPrairiePress.
https://newprairiepress.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?filename=2&article=1007&context=ebooks&type=additional#:~:text=Emails%20are%20used%20for%20quick,the%20least%20formal%20correspondence%20genre.

Blogs and Blogging: Text and Practice

Aimeée Morrison

A relatively new genre in digital literary studies, the weblog, or blog, has shot to prominence as a primarily popular medium. From its modest beginnings as a sort of digest tool for computing professionals and internet hobbyists, the blog has attained the mainstream as a form of digital personal diary, an outlet for citizen journalism, a community space for special interest forums, and a medium for more passive entertainment. Current estimates suggest that a new blog is created every *second*; nearly 54 million were published as of late 2006 (Technorati 2006). Many of these blogs — in all the categories identified — are written and read by academics as well as their students. Many more, including especially journalistic and political blogs, are becoming objects of study in a variety of research contexts in the humanities and social sciences. Also, with their strong emphasis on readability, audience, and style, blogs are of increasing interest to the fields of rhetoric and composition as a pedagogical tool and emerging creative writing genre. Literary scholars, too, are examining the links between blogging and more traditional forms of publication as many prominent bloggers either hail from the print media, or are recruited by it. Similarly, as happened after the popularization of the World Wide Web, longstanding and established print media such as national newspapers and mass-market magazines are beginning to incorporate elements drawn from blogging into their publishing purviews, a development of interest to media and communications researchers. A corpus of research in new media, also, is beginning to address the role and impact of blogs on practices of internet sociability and computer-mediated communication (CMC), with a particular eye to behaviors characteristic of identifiable demographics.

The weblog as a writing form is fundamentally about fostering personal expression, meaningful conversation, and collaborative thinking in ways the World Wide Web had perhaps heretofore failed to provide for; not static like a webpage, but not private like an email, as well as more visually appealing than discussion lists, blogging's rapid rise to online ubiquity bespeaks its quite particular fit into a previously unidentified hole in the digital universe, and this appeal is worth exploring. Here, we will proceed from definitions and histories, through an examination of the requisite undergirding technologies, enumerating the many genres of writing supported by blogging, with an emphasis on resources for reading and writing in this form, finally overviewing the research on the nature and effects of blogging and the pertinence of this practice to literary studies. For those interested in creating or participating in blogs, a list of resources follows this chapter.

Weblogs

"Blog" is a contraction of "weblog," itself a compound of web log, a term originally designating the report generated by the automated tracking of activity and traffic on computer servers. Blogging as a practice is rooted in computing science and engineering, among whose professionals this form first appeared, in the mid-1990s. In its most rudimentary incarnation, the weblog was a simple HTML page featuring annotated hyperlinks to sites of interest to the page's author. They were logs of their authors' travels over the internet, not differing substantially in form or content from many early personal home pages, except in the frequency or regularity with which the information on them was updated or changed. Recognized as a distinct genre from about 1997 by a small and bounded community of participant readers and writers, when the development of simple-to-use blogging software around 1999 promoted the spread of the practice to a larger group, the "weblog" came to be known more commonly as the "blog."[1] The more informal term "blog" was chosen as Merriam-Webster's "Word of the Year" for 2004 (Merriam Online 2004). Of course, this honor is accorded to the most *looked-up* word in the online version of the dictionary. The need to search for a definition of the term indicates that the public discourse of blogging — references to the practice or to particular sites in mainstream media —exceeds the general knowledge. Accordingly, a January 2005 Pew/Internet Data memo on "The State of Blogging" indicates that less than 40 percent of surveyed internet users knew what blogs were — 62 percent could not define the word (Rainie 2005).

So what *are* blogs, then? As a writing genre, weblogs manifest several essential and optional characteristics, all of which are supported by the common blogging software packages to varying degrees (more on which later). These characteristics, in decreasing order of prominence and importance, include: the discrete post as fundamental organizing unit; date- and time-stamping of posts; the appearance of posts in reverse chronological order; hyperlinking to external sites; the archiving of posts and references to posts with permalinks and trackbacks; the reference to other likeminded or otherwise interesting blogs through the provision of a blogroll; the capacity for reader comments on posts; and the organization of posts by keywords into separate browsable categories. Each characteristic contributes to distinguishing the blog from other genres of digital writing that are its kin, genres such as the webpage, the email, the web ring, or the discussion group, and it is useful to consider each characteristic in turn.

At its most basic, a blog is a webpage comprised of individual posts. Posts have been likened variously to newspaper articles, diary entries, or even random scribbles in a notebook, and they can contain simple links to other sites, narrative commentary, or embedded or linked media components like photographs, videos, or audio files. Posts can be of varying lengths, ranging from a sentence fragment with a single embedded link to a multi-screen essay complete with references; generally, posts tend to the shorter rather than the longer. Herring et al. (2005), in their quantitative analysis of weblogs, for example, found an average post length of about 210 words among their 200-blog sample. As the date- and time-stamp function indicates, blogs are assumed to be frequently updated, with "frequently" meaning in some cases hourly and in others once or twice weekly. The National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education estimated in 2003 that 77 percent of more than 500 sample blogs it surveyed had been updated within the last two weeks (NITLE 2003a). Generally, it is a blog's currency of information that is its greatest attraction — hence the reverse chronological posting order, privileging the most recent updates — but bloggers can offer other means to navigate and browse what can become quite hefty archives of materials. Keywording of blog posts allows for

the construction of discrete, blogger-defined categories of entries, allowing readers to browse a subset of posts dealing with a particular category. A blogger of quite catholic writing interests might keyword her posts so that readers need not wade through those about cats or about *Prison Break* in order to follow the thread about *Nicholas Nickleby* and Dickens's comic genius, or the one about ActionScripting in Flash.

Many blogs feature embedded hyperlinks to materials being commented upon. Traditionally — which is to say, circa 1997–9, when weblogs were first becoming recognizable as a distinct form of digital publication — the weblog served a digest function, acting as a daily compendium of annotated links to sites of interest to the blogger and his or her readers (Blood 2000). These posts tended to be short and were explicitly organized to direct readers to the site commented upon. As blogs spread and the genre expanded beyond this digest function, longer, discursive posts have become more common and the hyperlink in some cases has proportionally faded in importance; this is especially true of diary-style blogs that emphasize stream-of-consciousness narration of the blogger's daily life or emotional state over more explicitly critical or socially engaged kinds of writing. Herring et al. (2005) found that nearly a third of their sampled blog posts featured no links at all; they surmise that this is owing to the numerical superiority of diary-style blogs in their corpus. The authors suggest further that this percentage would be even higher had they not deliberately excluded several blog hosts that were explicitly promoted as online diary services.

One of the more interesting features of the blogging world — or "blogosphere," as it refers to itself — is its recursive self-referentiality, and the opportunities it offers for digital conversation. Conversation is most obviously encouraged between blog authors and blog readers by the built-in capacity for reader feedback: the "comment" feature of most blogging software and services allows any reader to add their own comments to a post. Here again, though, Herring et al. (2005) found a far lower incidence of interaction than is popularly claimed for blogs: the number of comments per post ranged from 0 to 6, with a mean of 0.3. The free-for-all of democratic, unfiltered interaction provided for by anonymous, instant commenting has been severely challenged by the advent of "comment spam," the blogosphere version of unsolicited mass-mailed advertisements: early ideals of mass participation are now bumping up against the realities of un-neighborly commercial practices. Depending on the setup, commenting may be completely anonymous (a practice that can leave the blog open to inundation by comment-spam, or encourage repercussion-free digital vandalism) or may require a reader to register a screen name, email account, and password, and to pass a small test (generally, deciphering textual content from a provided image) to prove that the comment issues from a traceable human and not a spam-bot. Similarly, different levels of editorial oversight allowed for by blogging software mean that comments may appear the moment they are made, or may first require approval by a vetting human eye before being appended to the post.

From commenting upon and pointing to other internet sites, blogs soon began commenting upon and pointing to one another. Such blog-to-blog references may take the form of a simple comment pointing readers to the commenter's own blog in the context of elaborating a longer response, or may occur in the context of one blog post more explicitly linking to another via technologies such as the trackback and permalink. Permalinks offer a stable URL reference to a particular post, so that this post may be linked to or otherwise referenced reliably and unambiguously. Trackbacks list and link to those external sites that reference the post in question — a kind of "see who linked to me" feature that can serve to key a reader to a multi-site conversation, or simply to indicate the popularity of the blogger or the buzz-level of the post; trackbacks are semi-automated and require both the linker and linkee to have tracking software enabled. However, the most common way that blogs reference each other is through the blogroll, a simple list of blog titles running down the side of each page: it promotes the blogs the blogger finds useful or entertaining, denoting affiliation with like-minded others in a community of readers and writers. Blogrolls are one of the main filtering tools by which readers access blog resources of interest to them, as we will see below. They also foster community and conversation in their function as aggregators of bloggers and readers, and of topics, viewpoints, and references.

As research undertaken by the Pew Internet and American Life Project and others makes clear, the blogosphere is expanding at a great pace — from an estimated 21 million American blog readers in early 2004 to an estimated 32 million by the end of that year (representing an increase from 17 to 27 percent of all American internet users, whom Pew estimates to number 120 million). This indicates a 58 percent growth in blog readership in a span of ten months. Pew also marks at 7 percent the rate of blog authorship among the American internet-using population — this makes for 8 million bloggers, by its count (Rainie 2005). Internationally, Technorati (<http://www.technorati.com>), the blog-tracking website and search engine, was indexing more than 54 million blogs globally in late 2006, an ever-shifting roster at a time in which blogs are created at a greater rate than the one at which they go defunct. LiveJournal (<http://www.livejournal.com>), for example, is home to 10 million separate accounts, of which nearly 2 million are considered "active in some way": slightly more than half of this subset of active accounts has been updated within the previous month, and one-fifth of these within the last 24 hours (LiveJournal). There are several reasons, both cultural and technological, driving the increases in readership and authorship of blogs. We will address these here in turn, both in the context of the broader population and of the academy more specifically.

One of the factors driving the increase in popular blog readership, and a greater awareness of the blogosphere generally, was the 2004 American presidential election, which saw a veritable explosion of political blogs devoted to critiquing, mudslinging, or fundraising — or sometimes all three.[2] During this election, bloggers earned press credentials for nomination conventions and other campaign events, their activities were reported on in established media outlets, and the bloggers themselves began to be called upon as pundits in these same media. This greater penetration of the "real world" by bloggers increased their visibility among newspaper readers and television watchers generally, leading to a rise in blog traffic. Further, staunchly partisan Democratic, liberal, or left-leaning blogs like *Daily Kos*, *Talking Points Memo*, and others offered what many considered to be a bracing alternative to the perceived blandness and conservatism of the mainstream media. The internet-dependent campaign of Howard Dean to seek the Democratic nomination, for example, was almost more newsworthy than the candidate himself, with the success of the *Blog for America* model of citizen participation, organization, and fundraising surpassing all expectations. On the Republican or conservative side, the campaign of the "Swift Boat Veterans for Truth" had a

strong internet presence backed by a blogging CMS, and garnered much traffic, and the right-leaning political blog *Power Line* was chosen by *Time* as its "blog of the year" in 2004 (McIntosh 2005: 385).

In the academy, blogging has proven to be very popular among undergraduates, graduate students, and the professoriate, likely more popular than in the population as a whole — as Pew's research indicates, blog authors disproportionately manifest one or more of the following demographic characteristics: they are young, male, have access to high-speed internet connections, have been online for more than six years, are financially prosperous, and have high levels of education. University populations present these characteristics in varying degrees among their many constituent groups. Many undergraduates maintain personal diary blogs in addition to profiles on MySpace, Facebook, and the like; the blogosphere is awash in students. Herring et al. (2005) found that 57 percent of their sample blogs were written by self-identified university students — and they had excluded from consideration youth-skewed diary services like LiveJournal and Diaryland. Among the professoriate, blogging activities range across the whole breadth of the blogosphere. Pseudonymous diarizers like "New Kid on the Hallway" chronicle life in general as well as life on the tenure track in informal, personal, and intelligent ways, linked in tight blogroll and comment communities of similarly positioned and trained readers. Blogs like *Rate Your Students* are mostly comprised of comments from anonymized respondents, in this case mocking and parodying the popular *Rate My Professors* web service. Daniel W. Drezner's eponymous political punditry blog both reflects his academic work in political science and departs from the academic standards that govern his peer-reviewed work (his "About Me" page even addresses the question "Why are you wasting valuable hours blogging instead of writing peer-reviewed academic articles?" —one possible answer might be that he is now co-editor of a book on blogging). *Grand Text Auto* is a group blog devoted to "procedural narratives, games, poetry, and art" and authored by six new media artists, theorists, and technicians, most of whom hold academic positions, and two of whom contribute essays to this volume. *Language Log* chronicles and digests linguistic quirks, and two of its contributors, academics Mark Liberman (the site's founder) and Geoffrey K. Pullum, have recently published a book based on the blog's contents.

Constituent Technologies of Blogging

Blog writing, as distinct from blog-reading, is unlikely to have become as much of a mainstream pastime as it has were it not for the introduction, in mid-1999, of simple, hosted, and free blog authoring software with graphical user interfaces. A variety of CMS, or "content management system," blogging software like Pyra Labs' Blogger began to offer pre-made technical templates into which authors could simply pour their content, much like filling out an HTML form. This software dramatically lowered the technical barrier to entry, freeing would-be bloggers from HTML troubleshooting and onerous programming (or under-featured sites) so that they could instead concentrate on the writing: the result was an explosion in the number of blogs published. CMS-based blogging software applications offer a set of tools simple enough to operate that anyone competent with a web-based email account can easily be up and blogging in an afternoon. In this vein, Blogger now describes itself as "the push button publishing tool for the people" (Pyra Labs 2006). Some of the most prominent and well-used current applications are Blogger, now owned by Google; "online diaries" LiveJournal and Diaryland; downloadable Movable Type and hosted Typepad; Wordpress; and Radio Userland. Many others appear and disappear daily; most offer varying levels and costs of service. Some are free and hosted, some charge fees for upgrades like expanded storage space and support for multimedia applications such as podcasting or photoblogging, many offer premium services for professional users, and all offer slightly different functionality. Reading a blog, of course, requires nothing more than an internet connection and a web browser, and as most blogs still skew heavily toward textual content, even a very poor internet connection will suffice to provide an adequate window on the blogosphere.

While the basic practices and tropes of blogging have remained fairly constant since the advent of graphical blog-editors, more recently, syndication has become a common feature of the blogosphere. RSS (Really Simple Syndication) and Atom are XML-based programs aiding the spread of blog readership across the internet population more generally. Syndication aggregates the most recent updates to a site, basically providing a mini-site of only new content. Syndication is a "push" technology which directs content to interested users on the basis of subscription, as opposed to the more traditional reading model of search-and-visit (that "pulls" readers to a site). Syndication technologies basically allow a reader to customize her own newsfeed, with newly posted snippets of information from selected sources aggregated for the reader as they appear. The feature is as common with mainstream online news sites as it is with blogs. Developed in various contexts from the late 1990s, syndication has been coming into its own as a mainstream technology since about 2002, with support for it increasingly built into standard internet browsers, rendering it accessible to nearly everyone online.

Genres of Blogs

The landscape of blogging is changing rapidly as new users come to write and read in this medium; as with the popularization of the internet through graphical World Wide Web browsers from about 1994, the mass influx of new participants is altering the form at the very instant that its earliest communities seek to codify and prescribe acceptable uses, behaviors, and fundamental definitions. Prominent and early blog-gers like Rebecca Blood have devised widely disseminated codes of ethics for the blogosphere at the same time as this space becomes populated by users who have never read a blog before starting to write one (Blood 2002). Blood's code is based on journalistic practice, and as such is endorsed by sites like Cyberjournalist.net (see, for example, Dube 2003), but the analogy with journalism — a tremendously popular one — does not begin to cover the full extent of the blogosphere: most new users, an overwhelming numerical majority, are writing personal diaries online, and have a very different understanding of the roles and responsibilities of bloggers. Aware perhaps of this split, Koh et al. (2005), in an undergraduate thesis on blog ethics, break the blogosphere into "personal" and "non-personal" domains, a bifurcation

based on the quite different demographics, audience, intent, content, and ethical frameworks informing both groups, as identified in the more than 1,200 responses to their online survey. For their part, Herring et al. (2005) note several competing blog genre taxonomies. They note Blood's tripartipite model of the traditional "filter" blog, the emerging diary-style "personal journal," and a discursive-essay-based "notebook" blog, as well as Krishnamurthy's four quadrants of "online diaries," "support group," "enhanced column," and "collaborative content creation" blogs. Finding these models wanting, the authors settle on their own genre categories, based on an initial survey of their blog samples: these are personal journals, filters, and k-logs ("knowledge-logs," generally used within organizations for technical support applications, or other oft-updated, information-rich content). According to Jeremy Williams and Joanne Jacobs (2004), "the great beauty of blogs is their versatility," and they lay out yet another taxonomy based on who is writing and what about: among the authorship categories they discern "group blogs, family blogs, community blogs, and corporate blogs," as well as "blogs defined by their content; eg 'Warblogs' (a product of the Iraq War), 'LibLogs' (library blogs), and 'EduBlogs'." The various taxonomies identified in the scholarship have not coalesced into any kind of consensus: blogs can be and are grouped formally, by the audience or effects they aim for, by the degree of publicness or privateness they manifest, by the kinds of authors they feature, and by the kinds of content they highlight.

Despite this continuing debate, it is possible to discern broad categories of topic, tone, and audience in the blogosphere, for purposes of overview, if nothing else. At one end of the spectrum, among the most visible, well-read, well-studied, and profitable blogs are those dedicated to journalism, politics, and tabloid-style celebrity gossip: for example, *The Drudge Report*, *The Huffington Post*, and *Talking Points Memo* count in the first or second categories, while *Go Fug Yourself*, *Gawker*, and *Pink is the New Blog* fall in the latter. Obviously, varying degrees of credibility, seriousness, and impact accrue to each, but they share several characteristics. Many of these blogs mimic the mainstream media in their organization as for-profit businesses supported by advertising revenue and driven by readership statistics. Bloggers on these sites often earn salaries and may be supported by research, secretarial, and technical staff. Thus, we can number among this type of blog also some of the sites created by established media organizations to supplement their pre-existing print and online materials, such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education*'s *News* and *WiredCampus* blogs. As the readership of this particular category of blog has expanded, so too has commercialization of the genre. As with the mainstream media, commercially supported blogs are largely financed by advertising revenue. Other blogs, particularly political blogs, may be supported by reader donation. Banner ads populate the larger sites, but even more small-scale operations can profit from Google AdSense ads or partnerships with online retailers. Blogs that adopt the commercial model face many of the same pressures the established mass media addressed throughout the twentieth century: attracting more advertising revenue by capturing larger shares of the available audience.

This very public category of blog occupies only a tiny corner of the blogosphere, but garners a disproportionate share of media and academic attention. As Shawn McIntosh observes,

> The power and potential of blogs does not come from sheer numbers, but rather from the inordinate amount of power to influence media coverage as public opinion leaders that a handful of bloggers have acquired in a very short time.
>
> (2005: 385)

McIntosh is largely speaking about influential political and journalistic blogs, which fall into the "notebook" or "filter" genres, or Koh et al.'s (2005) "non-personal" category. This type of blog is far more likely to be written for an audience of strangers, with a purpose of providing commentary on public or political events. Further, these blogs tend to boast more readers than average, which may help account for their dominance in press accounts of blogging. McIntosh surmises as well a certain "inside baseball" aspect to the disproportion of attention and influence that accrues to these politics-and-current-events blogs. On average, Koh et al. (2005) find that this group of writers, whom they nominate "non-personal" bloggers, are more likely to be well-educated, older males. The National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education, similarly, in its breakdown of blog content authorship, finds that while the blogo-sphere as a whole achieves near-parity in terms of gender, in the subset of political websites (6 percent of the sites it surveyed), a mere 4 percent were authored by women (NITLE 2003b). Gossip and entertainment blogs — not journalism, but not diaries; informal but not personal — were not factored explicitly into these studies, and it would be interesting to determine the generic and demographic characteristics of these very popular sites; they appear to be even more overlooked than the online diaries Laurie McNeill identifies as underserved by scholarship.

At the other end of the blog genre spectrum may be counted the personal blogs, generally considered to be HTML inheritors of paper-based genres of life writing: autobiography, memoir, journal, scrapbook, and diary. McNeill sees in the blogo-sphere "an unparalleled explosion of public life writing by public citizens" (2003: 25), while noting quite rightly that "these Web diaries and blogs have received little academic attention" (2003: 26). To address this lack, Viviane Serfaty offers a "structural approach" to the study of this subset of the blogosphere, ascertaining a set of shared generic characteristics common to most: *accumulation*, referring to the piling-on of multimedia detail in the construction of the textual self, whereby text and image and links reinforce or call into question the diarist's persona (2004: 459–60); *open-endedness*, or the episodic and non-cumulative accretion of posts that distinguish diaries from autobiographies or memoirs (2004: 461–2); a *doubled self-reflexivity* that addresses both the nature of internet life-

writing as well as the diarist's motivation for writing in the first place (2004: 462–3); and *co-production*, the deliberate construction of the text for an audience that is able to respond to or to collaborate in the diarist's project of self-presentation or self-construction (2004: 465). Threads of commentary, posts, and trackbacks can be complex and tightly woven in these diary-blogs, despite the above-noted paucity of outbound links compared to punditry or digest blogs, giving a real feel of community to many of these sites, which may have core readerships in the single digits. Serfaty and McNeill each carefully link blog-based life-writings to prior internet forms (such as the "online diaries" in simple HTML that began appearing around 1995) as well as to print antecedents (that is, paper journals and diaries, and scrapbooks). The demographics of this subgenre are the inverse of those manifest in the more "public" kinds of blogging described above. On LiveJournal, online diaries are generated disproportionately by the young to communicate with their immediate circle of real-world acquaintance. Its age distribution curve peaks at 18 (419,000 registered users self-identified as this age) with the greatest concentration of bloggers falling in the 16–22-year-old range (LiveJournal 2006). Of those users who indicated their sex, interestingly, two-thirds self-identified as female.

The online diary genre of blog exerts a tremendously powerful pull on both readers and writers. As Serfaty notes, via the intermediary of the computer screen which both veils the computer user and reflects back his image to himself, "diarists feel they can write about their innermost feelings without fearing identification and humiliation, [while] readers feel they can inconspicuously observe others and derive power from that knowledge" (2004: 470). Koh et al.'s (2005) research shows that these personal bloggers are twice as likely as the more public bloggers to write for an audience of ten or fewer readers; non-personal bloggers are more than twice as likely to write for an audience of 100–500 people. Similarly, personal bloggers are nearly four times as likely to write for an audience known personally to themselves, while non-personal bloggers are more than four times more likely than the diarists to write specifically for an audience of strangers. Finally, about 75 percent of personal bloggers take as their primary content "Events in my life," "Family and home," and "Religious beliefs," while non-personal bloggers show a clear preference — in the range of 50 percent — for the categories "News," "Entertainment and Arts," and "Government and Politics" (Koh et al. 2005). This split, in which the smallest part of the blogosphere garners the most study and is taken to stand in for the whole, bears further investigation, and thus far it has been mostly undertaken by the life-writing and autobiography studies community.

In between these poles lies the vast and shifting middle ground, occupied by aspiring writers seeking both audiences and book contracts with provocative and literate projects, and professionals of all stripes creating classic digest-style blogs on their areas of expertise designed to appeal to a specific core of similarly trained readers, for example Matthew G. Kirschenbaum's blog in new media studies, *MGK*, or computing humanist Jill Walker's *jill/txt*. In this middle terrain we can also locate artists publishing multimedia blogs as creative outlets — photoblogs, vlogs or video blogs, storyblogs, and the like (see <http://www.photoblogs.org> or <http://www.freevlog.org> for examples of some of these). Of course, mobility among categories is quite fluid in these early days of blogging, with mainstream paper-based journalists like Dan Gillmor shifting to primarily blog-based writing, political bloggers like Markos Moulitsas Zuniga (*Daily Kos*) attaining press credentials and being interviewed on television and radio, and prurient personal/gossip blogs like Jessica Cutler's formerly anonymous *Washingtonienne* leading to public exposure and a contract for a book based on her blog. Many projects are hard to categorize neatly. New York municipal worker Julie Powell's online saga of her quest to get through every recipe in Julia Child's seminal *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* in one year was at once styled like a memoir (a time-delimited personal account) and a more public form of writing (the blog, *Julie/Julia*, was sponsored and hosted by online magazine *Salon*). This blog ultimately won the inaugural "Blooker Prize" (i.e., the "Booker Prize" of the blogosphere) and led to a rewriting of its contents for book publication.

Some of the generic instability of blogging has led to unexpected negative consequences and the articulation and debate of new ethical dilemmas — and to neologisms like "dooced," a verb describing a loss of employment as a result of blogging, named for fired blogger Dooce, whose eponymous blog has now become her source of income. Fundamentally, very much at issue are questions of libel and liability, of the distinctions between public and private writing, and tests of the notions of civility, propriety, and ethical behavior online. These topics remain to be explored by scholars in depth, or, indeed, at all.

Reading Blogs

Rebecca Blood (2000) surmises interestingly that just as blogs became poised to tap into a mainstream readership and become a fundamental and daily web technology, the ease of creation and maintenance provided by the new CMS-based blogging software led to such a massive increase in the number of blogs that would-be readers were simply overwhelmed. Rather than filter the internet into manageable or digestible (and entertaining) bits as blogs had heretofore been doing, the blogosphere itself seemed to become as vast and unnavigable as the World Wide Web. Reading blogs became complicated. Since that time (Blood was writing about the scene circa 1999), tools to enable readers to search for blogs of interest have developed. Many blogs acquire readers who have taken their direction from mainstream media reports. With many newspapers featuring "blogwatch" columns, and with their own online components increasingly incorporating blogging in some form (necessarily linking to other blogs), the MSM and blogging are leading readers to each other, in many cases readers who might seek out the *Globe and Mail* directly, but not a blog directly, for example. Otherwise, straightforward internet searches using Google or other tools often yield blogs among their top results, owing to blogs' ever-increasing numerical heft in the broader web ecosystem. Blog-specific search tools have evolved as well, sites ranking and rating various blogs, and offering neophyte readers a sense of the biggest and most popular blogs, as well as the capacity to topic-search only the blogosphere. Within the blogosphere itself, blogrolls and carnivals are self-organized mechanisms of recommendation and a kind of peer-review.

Special-purpose search engines catering to the blogosphere now make finding blog content easier. Google's blog-only search tool (<http://blogsearch.google.com>) uses the same interface as their regular search engine; its familiarity makes it quite popular. A simple Google search using the keyword that describes the content you're looking for, and "blog" as a second term, can also accomplish much the same end. More locally, hosting services like LiveJournal and Blogger also provide search tools, of their own sites, or of the blogosphere more generally. Of blog-specific search tools, though, Technorati is probably the best known. Technorati maintains statistics on the readership and unique page visits of high-profile blogs, and compiles lists of the most popular as well as the most referenced blogs online. It allows also for searching by post content, by blog keyword, or by most-recently-updated. *The Truth Laid Bear* (<http://truthlaidbear.com>), similarly, is a high-profile one-man-show run by the pseudonymous "N. Z. Bear," a computing industry professional who — as a hobby — has developed a system to compile traffic and link statistics for various blogs. It maintains a list of the most popular blogs, as determined by user traffic as well as by links to the blogs from other sites: this list is oft-consulted and very influential. *TTLB* calls its organization of the blogosphere the "ecosystem," and its rankings, as well as those of Technorati, are closely watched both by bloggers themselves as well as by the mainstream media.[3] *TTLB*'s ranking lists can be organized by number of inbound links (which may attest to a blog's authority, working much like the citation index offered in academic databases like Web of Science), or by number of daily visits, a marker of raw popularity. Both lists offer the raw numbers on which the rank is based, direct links to the blog in question, and a link to further details of the ranking, in which graphs show a week's worth of daily statistics on inbound links and page views, as well as a listing of recent posts and links to these posts. One of the strengths of *TTLB*'s system is that it is always current: it bases its rankings only on links and visits from the previous 7–10 days, so mobility in the rankings is widespread and watching the rankings shift is something of a spectator sport. For readers who wish to follow a number of blogs, aggregators like Bloglines (<http://www.bloglines.com>) save the effort of manually checking each site for updates. It allows readers to take advantage of RSS technologies by subscribing to various feeds at any number of blogs, and reading the content all in one place, a dynamic and personalized page where the latest updates are automatically collected and presented.

The blogroll, a sidebar link list pointing outward to other blogs, is the simplest blog filtering tool: it works on the principle that if you like my blog, then you'll probably like these other blogs that I like as well. Blogrolls can even break their lists into categories — this blogroll subset links to other blogs on the topic of knitting; this blogroll subset comprises what I feel to be the "best in show" of the blogosphere; this blogroll subset addresses Mac enthusiasts; this blogroll is comprised of blogs that link to me. Communities of interest are formed in the intersection of blogs in the blogroll. Bloggers have also developed blog "carnivals," regularly appearing, edited, rotating-host digests of submitted blog posts on particular topics. One carnival clearinghouse site links carnivals to print traditions, suggesting that "a Blog Carnival is like a magazine. It has a title, a topic, editors, contributors, and an audience. Editions of the carnival typically come out on a regular basis" ("FAQ"). One of the first was the "Carnival of the Vanities," a collection of well-written and interesting reads culled from the increasingly vast and noise-ridden blogosphere; carnivals now appear on nearly every subject imaginable, from humor to politics to sports to philosophy. According to blogger Bora Zivkovic (2005), successful carnivals share five characteristics: carnivals must "a) have a clearly stated purpose, b) appear with predictable regularity, c) rotate editors, d) have a homepage and archives, and e) have more than one person doing heavy lifting." Zivkovic's criteria are obviously debatable — for example, his criterion of clear and preferably narrow purpose excludes from consideration carnivals like Vanities.

What distinguishes blog carnivals from being simply blog posts — after all, blog posts also by nature and tradition digest and point to articles of interest on the greater internet — are the following characteristics: items appearing in carnivals are submitted to the blogger/editor by their authors; these items are chosen for publication based on their appeal to a wider community/audience and on their adherence to a particular topic, rather than simply reflecting the taste and whim of the carnival editor; posts in a carnival reference only other blog posts, and not other kinds of websites (that is, not personal webpages, or news sites, or organizational press releases, for example). Blog carnivals also, as Zivkovic notes, tend to rotate editors and location: Carnival of Bret Easton Ellis might appear this month on my blog under my editorship, while next month it is hosted by you on yours. Hosting a carnival is an excellent way to attract your target audience to your blog. Some carnivals are archived at third party sites, ensuring that readers can follow an unbroken chain of iterations. Blog carnivals can be located and accessed various ways. Blog Carnival Index (<http://www.blogcarnival.com>) has tracked nearly 4,000 editions of 290 different carnivals, maintaining lists of which carnivals are active, and the submission deadlines and editorial info pertaining to each carnival. It supports browsing and searching for particular carnivals by date updated, carnival name, and by category. Blog Carnival Index also provides forms by which would-be carnival posters and editors can submit their information to the carnivals of their choice, a handy feature that helps to automate what might otherwise become an onerous and time-consuming task. Blog Carnival Index has recently partnered with *The Truth Laid Bear*, and *TTLB*'s "Ubercarnival" lists are based on Blog Carnival data. Blog carnivals have caught on particularly with academic communities — they offer a sort of blogosphere peer-review, in that carnival posts must be submitted to and (increasingly) vetted by an editor before being launched on the world. As the blogosphere expands and the submissions to a carnival exceed its capacity to publish, control of quality and of topic are imposed, leading to a digital publication that more closely resembles the conventions of the dissemination of ideas in print.

Writing

In 1997, according to Rebecca Blood, there were twenty-three blogs — you could follow them all, know the bloggers, and feel a part of a tight-knit community. By 1999, it had become nearly impossible to manually track all the blogs, and new ones began appearing faster than they could be counted or assimilated into the prior community. Since then, writing blogs has become a tremendously popular pastime, to judge from the rate of new blog creation tracked by Technorati — recall their statistic that 75,000 new blogs were being created every day. Pew as well surmised from its research that 11 million American internet users were also bloggers (Rainie 2005). While not all of these blogs remain

active over the long or even medium term —the proportion of LiveJournal blogs that are deemed "active" comprise only one-fifth of registered sites on the host — the sheer bulk of new blogs indicates a strong and growing public interest in this form of online expression. As the form has come into its own, with increasingly standard technologies, layouts, interactions, and best practices, blogging has experienced growing pains. Particularly vexing have been issues of responsibility, liability, professionalism, privacy, and decorum — that is to say, we have entered just another digital culture debate! As the blogosphere expanded, the rules of the game within it changed, and the outside world also began to take notice. The relations between the digital and analog worlds seemed strained from the beginning, with liberties taken in the blogosphere harshly addressed outside of it. These intersections between the digital world and the more mundane one we generally inhabit offer fruitful topics for further research.

Notably (and apparently newsworthily, to judge from the MSM coverage of these incidents), many of the first wave of these new bloggers — not computing professionals, not digesting or filtering internet content but rather publishing personal information in diary-style posts on the new CMS blogging software — were distressed to find themselves being fired for their online activities (see Hopkins (2006) for a list, circa 2004).[4] Most of these bloggers seemed to rely on "security by obscurity": that is, thinly disguising their own identities (providing a different name for self and cat, while naming their actual employer, or vice versa) and remaining optimistic that no one they knew would read them, or that anyone would bother to decode their identities. This has not proven an altogether foolproof tactic. As a result, the Electronic Frontier Foundation (2005), acting to increase the liberty and security of netizens on a variety of fronts since 1990, offers an online guide to secure blogging, complete with a step-by-step guide to better anonymization as well as an outline of legal precedent and advice on "how to blog without getting fired". As the EFF notes, "anyone can eventually find your blog if your real identity is tied to it in some way. And there may be consequences," including distraught family members and friends, disturbed potential employers, and litigious current ones. The EFF's guide is a good place for budding bloggers to begin.

Academic bloggers face similar personal and professional pressures when they blog, but are drawn to the form for compelling reasons, among them the opportunities to network with scholars they might not otherwise meet, to avoid academic isolation if theirs is an arcane subspecialty, to test new ideas on a willing expert audience in an informal manner, to ask for help from this same audience, and to keep abreast of colleagues and research. Nevertheless, academic blogging has its detractors. An opinion piece by "Ivan Tribble" for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in July 2005 (2005a) saw the pseudonymous senior academic opine on the negative impact blogging had on the prospects of job candidates interviewed at his institution: he goes so far as to caution that "the content of the blog may be less worrisome than the fact of the blog itself," a pretty clear denunciation of the very idea of blogging. This column, unsurprisingly, generated a digital outpouring of indignation, most notably on Kirschenbaum's blog. In his response to Tribble's article, Kirschenbaum (2005) challenged his audience to offer up the tangible benefits they had earned from their blogging activities: this is as good and as thoughtful a defense of academic blogging as one is likely to find in this informal medium. Tribble references this blog post and its comments in his follow-up column "They Shoot Messengers, Don't They?" (2005b). Similar commentary on the *Chronicle*'s Academic Job Forum continues the (somewhat paranoid) debate. However, elsewhere on the *Chronicle*, another essayist describes the blogosphere as "a carnival of ideas" which "provide a kind of space for the exuberant debate of ideas, for connecting scholarship to the outside world" (Farrell 2005). Yet another column, by David D. Perlmutter (2006), who is preparing a book for Oxford University Press on political bogging, proclaims the urgency of the questions "What are blogs? How can we use them? What exactly are they good for?" for students of politics as well as its practitioners. A piece by Robert Boynton (2005) for the "College Week" edition of *Slate* summarizes the professional-concerns response of the academy to blogs and blog culture. Often generating more heat than light, these writings nonetheless indicate the challenge that this particular writing genre poses to the academy, and as with other online practices before it, invigorates the debate about the values as well as the failings of our established pedagogical, research, and collegial practices.

Blogging in Literary Studies

Blogging has its attractions for scholars, as a venue for writing, teaching, and occasionally primary and (more occasionally still) secondary research. Many very worthwhile blogs (particularly in humanities computing, as technophilic a group of early adopters as the humanities and social sciences might hope to nurture) offer information of use to the literary studies community, providing annotated and focused lists of resources and offering opportunities for rich interaction among blog-readers and blog-writers. Popular books on the techniques and social impacts of blogging increasingly abound, as does coverage of the various parts of the blogo-sphere in the mainstream media. The academic scholarship that studies blogs is slightly thinner on the ground, and has thus far made more appearances in journals (both peer-reviewed and not) and in blogs than in book-length studies. This scholarship can be broken into several categories. Most numerous are the investigations of the intersections between mainstream media — particularly journalistic media — and blogging. Questions of blog-provoked revisions to journalistic practices and ethics, often articulated in the form of a crisis of authority and relevance, appear in the journals devoted to communications studies, journalism, and new media and society (e.g. McIntosh 2005, Robinson 2006). In a similar vein are analyses of the impacts of blog readership and authorship on political processes, particularly in the United States, but also in the context of activist or dissident blogging around the world (e.g. Kerbel and Bloom 2005, Riverbend 2005, Perlmutter 2006).[5] A critical as well as informal literature details experiments with the use of blogging technologies and practices in writing and other pedagogies (e.g. Krause 2004, Ellison and Wu 2006, Tyron 2006; more informal assessments of blogs in teaching can be found on the blogs of teachers who employ them, as well as within class blogs themselves).[6] As well, the literary studies community has begun to examine the links between diary-style blogging and other forms of life writing (e.g. McNeill 2003, Serfaty 2004). Of course, researchers in cyberculture and new media studies are as keen to understand the operations and implications of this new form as they are to participate in shaping it. Online, the Weblog Research on Genre (BROG) Project offers a wealth of research

papers as well as lists to other prominent research-oriented sites such as *Into the Blogosphere* (Gurak et al. n.d.). In short, the field of research on, and practice in, blogging is just opening up. Certainly, as YouTube is gobbled up by Google while the mass media hails the internet video age, and as the culture at large clues into youth-oriented social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, it is clear that blogging's time as media-darling will soon enough draw to a close. But the form is established enough, the needs it meets real enough, its format alluring enough, and its community of practice large enough that bloggers will continue to write and scholars will continue to examine them, likely for a long time to come.

Notes

1 This informalization and contraction is in keeping with prior digital cultural practice that has seen "World Wide Web" become "web," "electronic mail" become first "e-mail" and then "email," and "Instant Messaging" become "IM," among numerous other examples (see a similar point in Hale and Scanlon 1999: 13–14).

2 Different critics impute different reasons: McIntosh names the South Asian tsunami as a force driving blog readership to new highs (2005: 385); Herring et al. (2005) suggest the "aftermath of 9/11 and … the 2003 U.S-led invasion of Iraq" drove up blogging participation rates. Most accounts, both popular and academic, seem to privilege journalistic weblogs in their assessments of the increasing "pull" factor of the blogosphere. Viviane Serfaty, however, studying weblogs as an evolution of the earlier web-based online diary, proposes instead that writers in this genre increased greatly upon the appearance of forms-based graphical weblog editors — online diarizing, that is, was a popularizer of the weblog (2004: 458).

3 That a hobby project by one person, named for a pun on its author's pseudonym, and offering sixteen ranking categories ranging from Higher Beings, Mortal Humans, and Playful Primates (highest ranked, by links) through to Wiggly Worms, Multicellular Microorganisms, and Insignificant Microbes (lowest ranked, by links), reminds us how young and informal the blogosphere is: as "N. Z. Bear" himself remarks of his idiosyncratic ecosystem taxonomy, "Consider it a gentle reminder that this all shouldn't be taken too terribly seriously" (FAQ).

4 The likelihood of getting fired increases with the growth in a given blog's readership, and readership tended to grow on the basis of the entertainment value of a blog, a value generally based on the outrageousness of the posted material. And the material on blogs was certainly not what you might expect from polite or discreet F2F (face-to-face) conversation — composed alone and in private, published under pseudonyms, material in diary blogs often exceeds the bounds of polite conversation, broadcasting to an unknown and potentially limitless audience the intimate details of the blogger's life and experiences. The generic imperatives of the blog form thus seem necessarily to send it into a collision with real-world practices and ethics.

5 My research into journalistic blogs has benefited from Stephanie Radcliffe's work on an Honors Thesis on the topic, for which I acted as advisor.

6 Research by Caroline Leitch undertaken originally for Randy Harris informs this list.

Fonte: Digital Humanities:
http://digitalhumanities.org:3030/companion/view?docId=blackwell/9781405148641/9781405148641.xml&chunk.id=ss1-6-1&toc.id=0&brand=9781405148641_brand