Zachary Goldman 2/13/18

MEDST 255

Profile of an internet technology

Blogs and Blogging

A blog, short for weblog, is a place where one can write their personal feelings about whatever they desire, online. It is very much like an online diary, in the sense that they are typically updated regularly, or at least according to most definitions they are. While that may not be the most glamorous or exciting sounding thing, blogs are very important to how the internet has evolved. Without blogs, websites like Facebook, twitter, Tumblr, etc., probably never would have existed. Now that we have a general idea of what a blog is, let’s take a deeper look into the history of blogs and blogging.

It is often difficult, or almost impossible to narrow down the first person to popularize a medium. That being said, Justin Hall is often credited as being the one who made blogging popular back in the mid 90’s. The New York Times even called him ”the founding father of blogging”, with his highly popular online diary entitled “Justin’s Link’s.” The term “blog” was not even used until 1999, by Peter Merholz, who is credited with coining the phrase.

While initially requiring a relatively high barrier to entry; in the sense that some degree of coding knowledge was needed; blogging has become an easier thing to work with over time. Now if you want to create or join a blog, you can with just a few clicks of a mouse. No longer does it require any such experience with coding. This is often the case with most new technology. It starts out as something meant for the elite, and slowly, but surely becomes something that anyone can become a part of, and that ability to have the readers take part in blogs is one of the reasons that they became so popular. If a newspaper posted a blog about an article, they could have immediate feedback from their viewers who could leave comments. It is a form of “reverse publication” that would add a whole other layer to something as simple as a news article. However, the inevitable decline of blogs in popularity is largely due to the ideas conceived from blogs. People today don’t want to read a whole essay, or even paragraphs. Things like twitter and its limited character count are what people have become accustomed to and they likely aren’t going to change any time soon. “2017 is a very different world than 2007. Today is noisier and people’s attention spans shorter than any other time in history…and things are only getting worse. Facebook counts a ‘view’ as 1.7 seconds and we have 84,600 of those in a day.”

Back in 2006, Cingular; now just called AT&T; started offering access to Myspace on people’s cellular phones for $2.99 a month. Now if you are anything like I, then reading that sentence made you chuckle, but at the time, this was a big deal. Myspace was essentially the personal blogging website. Before Facebook, twitter, etc., people had their own blogs on Myspace, and most people had one. While most people don’t typically think of Myspace as much more than a place to meet people, it was in fact a very popular blogging site. I don’t think it is too far a stretch either to say that perhaps this promo of Cingular’s could have led to the way things are today. 2006 was close to the beginning of the smartphone era with the iPhone coming out only a year later. Without this agreement of Myspace and Cingular, things may not be the way they are now, with practically every website having an app counterpart.

The latest incarnation of the Blog would be what is now known as the “Vlog”, or “video log.” It is essentially the same thing as a blog except instead of written words, it is spoken words. It is as simple as a guy recording himself talking about his day for five minutes and uploading it to a website. Websites like YouTube for instance, have thousands of these “Vlogging” channels, and people can make a lot of money off of them as well. In fact, at this point, a Vlog may be just as, if not more popular than blogging.

A very popular modern blogging website is Tumblr. Tumblr seems to me to be like a compromise between Twitter, and full length blogging. If someone is looking to write lengthy posts then they should probably look elsewhere, but for someone who can get the point across in about five hundred characters, it seems like a great place for them. Another good aspect to Tumblr is that it is available on most, if not all, mobile devices and allows for pictures to be posted as well. It is a good place for someone who might want to have a dialogue with an audience about their opinions.

WordPress is another very popular choice for blogging. I personally have had to use this one for homework assignments in certain classes. WordPress seems to be an interesting case of trying to stay with the times. Originally a blogging website, it has evolved to be more than that. If you want to write simple blogs then that is fine, but there are many more functions here that can be taken advantage of if you so desire. It is also a useful content management site, which basically gives the user control over their website and posts, and if you are decently tech savvy you can do a lot with the tools provided.

Blogging, is known for being a primarily internet based term, but there are examples of people writing blogs even earlier in history; really any diary is technically a blog; even if the term was not yet coined. Despite that, blogging is known to most for its online components. Blogs have had an interesting place in internet history, in how they went from something that not too many people took part in, to a nationwide phenomenon with websites like Myspace; again, a funny thing to read; and how they continue now in smaller capacities with twitter being more popular than ever. Another unforeseen modern application of such a format is in colleges, professors often create, and have student make their own blogs for homework, or other assignments, and have other students write reviews or comments on their peer’s blogs. I can’t imagine many people saw these potential uses for blogs when they first started to become popular. In summation, blogs have had a somewhat significant, if slightly unnoticed, part in modern society, in even more ways than one might think.

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