



Are you ready for Web 2.0? An Introduction to Blogs & RSS

Faculty: Nicole C. Engard, *Web Manager*

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Nicole Engard
Web Manager
Jenkins Law Library

Nicole received her BA in Literary Studies and Computer Programming from Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. Prior to joining the Jenkins Web team, she worked as the Webmaster for the Human Resources department at Juniata College. She joined the Jenkins staff in June of 2001 as the Web Assistant and became Web Manager in August 2003. In her current position, she directs the development and maintenance for the Jenkins Web site (jenkinslaw.org), palawlibrary.com, and the staff Intranet. She is also a regular contributor to Jenkins' Webblits (blog.jenkinslaw.org) and the author of What I Learned Today... (web2learning.net).

In addition to her primary commitments, she guides and supports other Web-related projects including PA Legislative Histories, Jenkins Electronic Resources Network, Research Links, the Jenkins Flash newsletter, JAC Plus and the Court Records & Briefs online indexes. Nicole also teaches Web design workshops at the library and is a board member and instructor for the Upper Darby Adult Evening Program.

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Definitions & Explanations

What is Web 2.0?

"Web 2.0 is a term often applied to a perceived ongoing transition of the World Wide Web from a collection of websites to a full-fledged computing platform serving web applications to end users."¹

What does that mean?

When Tim Berners-Lee invented the web, he envisioned a read/write web. But what had emerged in the 1990s was an essentially read-only web on which you needed an account with an ISP (Internet service provider) to host your web site, special tools, and/or HTML expertise to create a decent site.²

Enter Web 2.0

Consider Tim Berners-Lee's web to be version 1.0. With the invention of interactive sites and tools like blogs and wikis the web has changed dramatically - allowing people without ISPs and without programming knowledge to create web sites with the click of a few buttons.

What is a Blog?

A blog is a website in which journal entries are posted on a regular basis and displayed in reverse chronological order. The term blog is a shortened form of weblog or web log.³

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0 (accessed on 1/19/06)

² <http://www.authorama.com/we-the-media-3.html> (accessed on 1/19/06)

³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog> (accessed on 1/19/06)

What makes a blog a blog?

- Posts displayed in reverse chronological order (this is a definite)
- Posts made on a regular basis (web sites are *mostly* static, blogs change)

It's that simple!

What is RSS?

The technology of RSS [Real Simple Syndication] allows Internet users to subscribe to websites that have provided RSS feeds; these are typically sites that change or add content regularly.⁴

What does that mean?

You can be notified when there is a change on a website (more specifically a blog) if that site offers a RSS feed.

One of the original uses for RSS was syndication. This means that you could publish content from another website on your own site for others to read.

RSS feeds are difficult to read without an aggregator or feed reader of some sort - see: www.jenkinslaw.org/webblits/rss.php.

What is a Feed Reader/Aggregator?

A RSS Aggregator/Feed Reader allows you to subscribe to multiple RSS feeds and read them all in one place. Using an aggregator eliminates the need to visit every single site you'd like to catch up on because all of the content is kept in one place.

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_%28file_format%29 (accessed on 1/19/06)

Finding Blogs That Will Interest You

Where do I look?

Start by seeing what other people are reading - a big part of Web 2.0 is collaboration and communication. Once you have a short list you can see what those bloggers read and so on.

You can also use blog search engines to find sites that might interest you.

- Blogdigger - www.blogdigger.com
- Google Blog Search - blogsearch.google.com
- Syndica8 - www.syndic8.com (this is an RSS search - not just blogs)
- Technorati - www.technorati.com
- and more...

There are also lists of blogs by category that may be of interest to you:

- Internet Public Library: Blogs (www.ipl.org/div/blogs/)
 - Law Blogs (www.ipl.org/div/blogs/#lawblogs)
 - Library Blogs (www.ipl.org/div/blogs/#libraryblogs)
- Jenkins Law Library
 - Blog & RSS Search (www.jenkinslaw.org/researchlinks/index.php?rl=276)
 - Law Blogs (www.jenkinslaw.org/researchlinks/index.php?rl=239)
 - Librarians' Blogs (www.jenkinslaw.org/researchlinks/index.php?rl=275)
- Law Library Blogs (library.law.wisc.edu/wisblawg/bloglistpublic.htm)
- Library Weblogs (www.libdex.com/weblogs.html)
- Open Directory Project > Library Blogs
(dmoz.org/Reference/Libraries/Library_and_Information_Science/Weblogs)
- PubSub Lists (www.pubsub.com/lists/)
 - Law List (www.pubsub.com/lists/law.php)
 - Librarian List (www.pubsub.com/lists/librarian.php)

Lastly, you can see what I subscribe to at www.bloglines.com/public/talia679 (it's a long list)

Must Haves

Here's my list of must haves:

- blyberg.net - *www.blyberg.net*
- InventBlog - *nip.blogs.com*
- Jenkins Law Library Webblits (of course) - *blog.jenkinslaw.org*
- JURIST - *jurist.law.pitt.edu*
- Lawrence Lessig - *www.lessig.com/blog/*
- LibraryStuff - *www.librarystuff.net*
- ResourceShelf - *www.resourceshelf.com*
- RSS Compendium - *ast.antville.org*
- RSS4Lib - *blogs.fletcher.tufts.edu/rss4lib*
- Sites & Soundbytes - *www.greenlakelibrary.org/blog*
- What I Learned Today... (of course) - *web2learning.net*

How Do I Keep Track?

Keeping up with and keeping track of your blog subscriptions would be insanely difficult if you had to visit each blog every day - enter RSS and feed aggregators.

Bloglines

Bloglines (*www.bloglines.com*) seems to be the aggregator of choice among most of the librarians I've talked to (and read).

Bloglines lets you organize your subscriptions and keep track of them all in one easy to access place, meaning you can access it from any computer with an internet connection.

Other Options

There are programs you can install right on to your desktop, but this limits where you can catch up on your reading.

There is a decent listing of other options that can be found in the Wikipedia (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_news_aggregators*).

How Do I Start Blogging?

There are a bunch of freely hosted blogging options that you can start with to get the hang of things. I've tried both Blogger (www.blogger.com) and WordPress (www.wordpress.com) and I prefer the latter because it's easy to transition from a hosted blog to one on your own server (www.wordpress.org).

What's the difference?

There are 2 blogging options:

1. Remotely Hosted
 - a. Stored on someone else's server
 - b. May have a cost associated with it
 - c. Limited control
 - d. Great way to learn how to blog without needing to know the technical end of things

2. Locally Hosted
 - a. Technical skills required
 - b. Your own web server required
 - c. Complete control

It's up to you to decide which option is the best for you and your library.

One blogger put together a list of free blog hosts that you can use to start your research (www.blackhat-seo.com/2005/free-blog-hosts/). There is also a comparison chart (http://www.ojr.org/ojr/images/blog_software_comparison.cfm) you can use to help you make your decision.

Does my blog have to be public?

Most blogging packages out there are meant for public blogs, but some do allow for password protection if you'd like your blog to only be accessible to a specific set of people.

TypePad (www.typepad.com) and LiveJournal (www.sixapart.com/livejournal/) allow the author to control who can read the blog.

Additional Reading

- Taking RSS Beyond Headlines : Part One
(http://www.basement.org/archives/2006/01/taking_rss_beyond_headlines_pa.html)
- Pssss... Have You Heard About RSS?
(<http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/forum/fall03/rss.html>)
- Keeping Up and Reaching Out with Blogs and RSS (<http://molib.org/Keeping.pdf>)
- Creating a Private Blog
(http://blogging.typepad.com/how_to_blog/2004/08/creating_a_priv.html)
- Briefing Document on "An Introduction To RSS And News Feeds"
(<http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/qa-focus/documents/briefings/briefing-77/>)
- Blogs for Libraries (<http://webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=767>)
- Building a Home for Library News with a BLOG
(http://www.infoday.com/cilmag/nov03/goans_vogel.shtml)
- Talkin' Blogs--LJ Round Table
(<http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6261414.html>)
- Bloglines for Librarians in Three (and a half) Easy Steps
(<http://joy.mollprojects.com/myprojects/rss/quickrss.html>)
- RSS and Blogs in Libraries (<http://umass-blogs-rss.pbwiki.com/>)