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Blogging Your Research: Teaching Students to Critically Assess and Participate in the Culture of Electronic Research and Writing

Amy Ratto Parks
University of Montana

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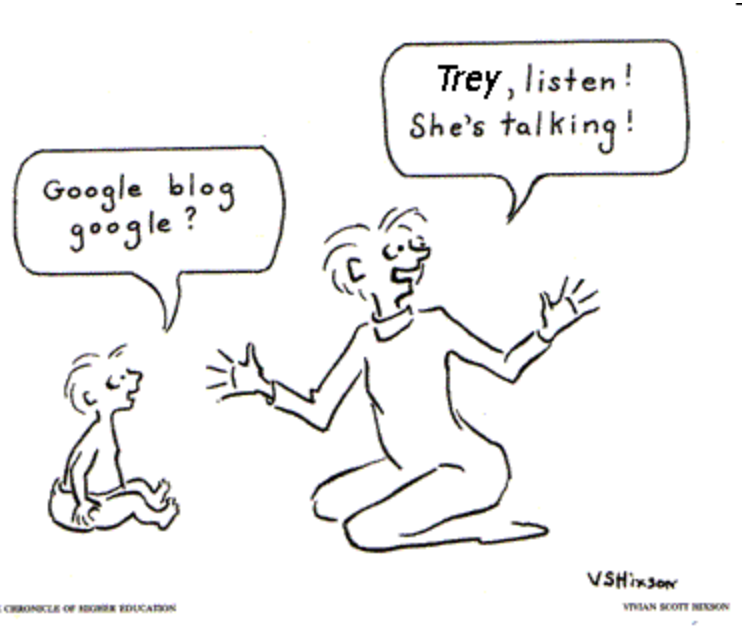
Blogging Your Research:

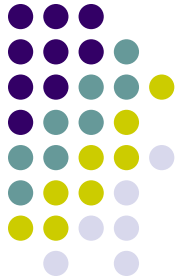
Teaching Students to Critically Assess and Participate in the Culture of Electronic Research and Writing

Amy Ratto Parks



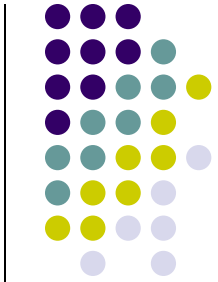
Finding Context

Definitions from Spring 2007



- **BLOG** (n.) Short for Web log, a blog is a Web page that serves as a publicly accessible personal journal for an individual. Typically updated daily, blogs often reflect the personality of the author. (v.) To author a Web log. (http://www.webopedia.com)
- **BLOG** A blog (a portmanteau of web log) is a website where entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog. (Wikipedia.com)
- **BLOG** 1. blog n. Short for weblog. A meandering, blatantly uninteresting online diary that gives the author the illusion that people are interested in their stupid, pathetic life. Consists of such riveting entries as "homework sucks" and "I slept until noon today." v. intr. The act of posting to a weblog. (http://www.urbandictionary.com)

Definitions from Fall 09

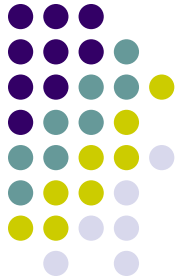


- **BLOG** v. read, write, or edit a shared on-line journal; web log: a shared on-line journal where people can post diary entries about their personal experiences and hobbies (wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn)
- **BLOG** A blog (a contraction of the term weblog) is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog)
- **BLOG** website that allows users to reflect, share opinions, and discuss various topics in the form of an online journal while readers may comment on posts. Entries typically appear in reverse chronological order. (en.wiktionary.org/wiki/blog)

Unit Overview

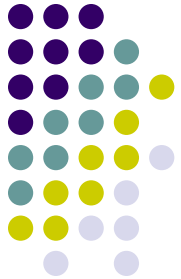
- Explore student involvement in online/social writing
- Explore popular web content
- Explore the blog as a genre
- Begin process of project inquiry; define a research question
- Transition into writing
- Reflect on the process

Bringing Social Writing into the Classroom



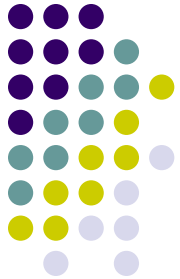
- Begin by asking questions about the students' assumptions about the kinds of information they find online.
- Have them list sites they regularly visit. Ask them to consider their purpose in visiting.
- What is the purpose behind the writing they see or produce there?

Explore Popular Web Content



- Compare/contrast age appropriate blogs/websites or social networking platforms like myspace, facebook, and twitter with personal blogs.
- Compare with personal/professional websites.
- For each ask the students to consider the purpose behind the writing they see.

Exploring the Blog as a Genre



- Since you are working toward creating your own blog for your next project in this class, I would like you to spend some time exploring the different kinds of blogs out there. Below is a list of blogs I found on www.forbes.com, where they were up for "best blog" status. I would like you to explore at least one blog from each category and consider:
  - what is the subject?
  - who is the audience?
  - what is the purpose?
  - what would the audience expect from this page?
  - what kinds of visual elements are present?
  - what kind of language and voice do you hear?
    - **Political Blogs**
    - **Food Blogs**
    - **Economics Blogs**
    - **Tech Blogs**
    - **Sports Blogs**

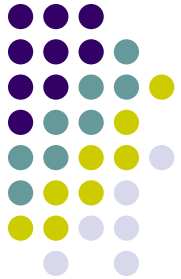
Transition into Writing

- Specifically, your blog needs to include:
  - 1,500 to 2,000 words of essay-based text (so this does not include your links, labels, title, etc.)
    - You may organize this any way you choose, considering your audience.
    - You still need to quote/use references, but you may include a link instead of a works cited.
- 7 sites linked to yours
- 2 or more pictures
- include narrative and academic elements
  - your personal experience counts as evidence here
  - the best arguments gracefully weave personal narrative and academic research together
- 5 specific resources cited (these need to be specific pieces of information such as articles, studies, etc. They should not be entire sites; those will already be linked to yours).

Process Reflection

- Rhetorical discussion for older students
- What was it like for them to be a writer/designer?
- Who did they imagine as their audience?

Special Considerations



- Privacy concerns for K-12
- Do you *want* the live, responding audience?
- Evaluating student writing in a blog
- Citations in a blog
- Requiring process reflection

Other Options to Consider

- Limiting the privacy parameters for your classroom
- Using the blog as a research log for small groups or as a whole class

Resources

- Slide 1 image: http://teachable.org/images/blog_cartoon.gif
- Slide 2: http://www.dailyblogtips.com/what-is-a-blog/
- Slide 9: http://www.auburn.edu/~burnsma/papers.html
- Slide twelve: http://msroszell.edublogs.org/