

InfoLink

A Community Newsletter of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science

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Up Front

Librarians in the Blogosphere

They are out there, multitudes of them. Everywhere you turn, it seems, is a link, a hit, a reference to someone's blog covering topics as broad as knitting and recipes, to the war in Iraq. Some are serious accounts of citizen journalism, social commentary, and places to share work-related information. Others are strictly online diaries, chronicling the mundane, the introspective, and the silly.

How people stumble upon them or create them is as personal as the blogs themselves. But a large and growing number of librarians have heard the call and have seen the potential in this wily and unchecked Internet power. This includes GSLIS students who have all tapped into the blogosphere for very different reasons, but have found themselves reassessing their blog's power to help them as students and employees in the library and information science field.

According to Technorati, a search engine and highly regarded resource for blogging on the Web, 70,000 blogs are born every day -- and this is by no means some new phenomenon. For the past seven years, as more and more new blogs enter the blogosphere at this incredible rate, the conversation surrounding this new information medium has become impossible to ignore. Why? Because blogs are not only linked to prestigious organizations like The New York Times and The Washington Post, but they are also being used as seriously accepted modes of communication within large institutions, public and academic, including Simmons College and its students.

It is not a place most people like to be in, but unfortunately, many of us can relate to the position GSLIS student Alison Cody found herself in during the spring of 2005. "I wound up in a job that had seemed like it would be interesting and exciting," she said. "It wasn't. It was either preposterously busy, or completely dead. There was no middle ground," Cody recalled. Cody was selling tickets at a local university hockey arena. During the busy hockey season, she "was bombarded with crazy customer complaints and a management team that was demanding, and at times, insulting."

Once hockey season ended in the early spring, the crowds at Cody's job calmed down a bit, and there was very little to do on a day-to-day basis. "I spent a lot of time online, trying to find interesting things to read. One of my friends from college had started a blog, and I had read all about them in connection with the presidential elections." Cody, who was a prolific writer during her undergraduate career,

said blogging inspired her to pick up her writing again. "Starting a blog seemed like it would kill two birds with one stone—it would give me something to do each day at work, and it would get me back into the habit of writing regularly."

Cody signed up for an account with Blogger, a popular, free blogging service run by Google. "I blogged about personal things," Cody recalls, "such as frustration with my job, what I did over the weekend, and how things were going with my library school applications. As far as I could tell, only my mom and one of my friends from college read it regularly."

Cody discovered that she really enjoyed blogging. But given the small audience for her personally-oriented stories and news, she

decided she needed to refocus. "I wanted to produce something that strangers might find interesting. I thought about the things I do and am involved with, that other people are also involved with, and I decided to start writing more about technology, libraries, and my hobbies."

As far as blogging about libraries goes, Cody is still finding her way. "Since I just started in the field, I don't quite feel like I have the background to really engage in some of the conversations that other blogging librarians are involved in. If I find something interesting at another blog, I'll hang onto the post and go back to it when I have time to think critically about the issue. Then, I'll eventually post my thoughts on my own blog."

Rebecca Metzger doesn't consider herself a blogger. In fact, Metzger, who graduated from GSLIS in December, admits to only

using blogs twice last year, but for very targeted purposes: school and job hunting. And unlike Cody, Metzger approached blogging with some trepidation. "Blogging was big at the time, and it seemed like a big mystery to me," she said. "I wanted to demystify it." When asked to produce a research diary for Professor Allen Smith's "Literature of the Humanities" class, Metzger decided to try blogging, which allowed her to update her research diary quickly, and helped her easily organize links to Internet resources. As Metzger began exploring the blogosphere, she found blogging came with its own strengths and weaknesses.

Much of a blog's power and popularity lies in its ease of use. With many free blog-hosting services available online, people with little technical know-how can set one up easily. Cody and Metzger both started with Blogger.

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WEBLOG

WEBLOG

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Olivia Gatti

Rebecca Metzger

Alison Cody

Snapshot

Daniel Fleming

“Life is a project. In real life, you get information from many sources for what you need. That’s what happens in the library. The library is a practice place for life.”

Daniel Fleming ’92LS is the vice principal at the Fuller and Walsh middle schools in Framingham, Massachusetts. Since 2002 he has taught “Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Strategies for Library Teachers” at GSLIS. He lives in Chelmsford with his wife Diane and the Cat with No Name.

Q: You grew up in North Cambridge. How did that influence you?

It was a blue-collar neighborhood and I grew up in a housing project. Every evening for years I walked to the North Cambridge Public Library to do my homework. Growing up there was a tremendous experience for me. The mix of “town and gown,” knowing people from many cultures, going to an urban school, having quality teachers at the public schools. Cambridge is the center of the universe for a lot of people.

Who had a big influence on you as a kid?

My dad was firefighter who passed away when I was young. But my mother and two sisters were strong influences on me. In our house, education was very important.

How did you find your way into librarianship?

I was a teacher in Cambridge and got involved in a study about how kids get motivated to learn. Everywhere I worked after that I found that *libraries* motivate kids. Kids *like* to be in them. What I call the Smile Index is high when kids are in the library, and this leads to the likelihood of higher achievement.

So, in the early 1990s I took a class in technology at GSLIS, and I loved it. This led to another and another, and then to talking with [Professor] Jim Baughman, and I finally enrolled in the school library teacher program. I worked for a while at UMass Lowell as a reference librarian and then as the coordinator of middle school libraries in Framingham. Eventually, however, I went back into school administration.

What do you like best about working at the middle schools?

The energy level! Middle school kids are 11 to 14 years old. These are the most important years, I think, because that’s when you activate kids’ interests. They might get interested in the theatre, or have their first experience on a sports team, join the chorus or band. They’ll probably change friendships during this time, and they’ll fall in love with a subject area. It’s a really important formative age when kids are seeking their identity.

Were you seeking your identity at that age?

Yes! I remember joining the Audio-Visual Club, for example. And here I am, a library media specialist today.

Tell me something about your course. What’s it about?

The premise is that the library is a legitimate classroom for teaching courses, like math. Back in 1998 the Department of Education released curriculum frameworks—what students should be taught, what they should learn. And there were no library frameworks. But imbedded in all of those frameworks was a wealth of requirements that could only be satisfied by using the library. I felt the frameworks were an opportunity for librarians to carve out a new role—a role in which we could be the switching station.

What are you passionate about professionally?

That learning never stops. That all students can learn. That libraries can make a difference in student’s lives.

If you could have a totally different career, what would you do?

Drive a tow truck. I haven’t given up on that.

Like the guys who tow cars from illegal parking spots?

No, no, like AAA road service guys who come and help you. It might be fun. You know, you’re out on your own, you’re independent, you drive up and *help* people. Someday I’m going to set up something like that for bikes. I’m going to call it Bike Bound. I’ve already registered that name. You can even see the first step at www.bikebound.com.

Why do you think you’re well-suited for the work you do?

I’ve always been curious about things. I love to learn. I’m enthusiastic about what I do. And I get so much energy from my job, from being in the school, in the library, in the classrooms, with the kids, with the teachers — being on the frontline. I like to listen. I recognize that I don’t have all the good ideas, so I involve myself with people who have good ideas. I seek them out. Colleagues, and even kids. You’d be amazed at what you can learn from kids.

When I talk to my Simmons students about a project, an activity, or goal, or about kids learning — these eyes have seen it or these ears have heard it. That experience forms the basis of my classes. It comes right from the heart.

Favorite task around the house?

I grow hot peppers each year and pickle them. Especially Hungarian wax peppers. They’re great. You open a jar six months later, and they’re still crispy.

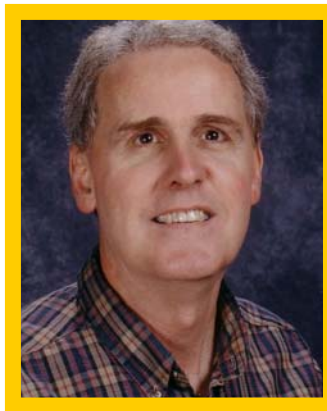
A treasured possession?

My son took an early interest in John Steinbeck. Some dads get their sons signed sport cards — you know, Pedro Martinez, Manny Ramirez. But I got my son a signed, first-edition copy of *The Red Pony*. When I told my wife I’d just paid \$3,000 for a book, she was totally shocked. But now my son is an English major at Stanford University, and he just proposed — and is now initiating — the university’s first-ever permanent course on John Steinbeck. It’s awesome.

If the world was your oyster, what would you change in public schools?

We’re really missing a great opportunity in public schools not having kids in libraries from kindergarten on. If we did, they would be more independent as learners, more motivated. I would make subjects more integrated. Kids wouldn’t be tied to one program or one textbook or one approach. The traditional classroom gives kids a textbook, and the implication is that it’s supposed to have all the answers. That’s not how life is. Life is a project. In real life, you get information from many sources for what you need. That’s what happens in the library. The library is a practice place for life.

Interview by Victoria Thatcher



Blogosphere, Continued

Continued from Page 1

With these services, a new blogger creates an account, picks a template that will determine how the blog will look, and uses an interface similar to Microsoft Word to write posts. More advanced users can use HTML and CSS to manipulate the template, or to create a template from scratch.

Looking back at her project, Metzger's not sure a blog was the best choice. Due to the fact that the most recent blog entry is always at the top of the page, she felt her research diary was hard to read as a single document. "But I really enjoyed it," Metzger said. "And it's something I can show on interviews." Which is exactly what she did when she applied for a position as Reference and Instruction Librarian at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. In fact, her second blog was created specifically for this interview.

"As part of the interview, I had to teach a 20-minute workshop geared toward undergraduates," Metzger said. "I decided to teach Academic Search Premier, but I wasn't sure how to present the workshop." She wanted to show the database in action as she taught searching skills, rather than present a series of slides, but she also needed a starting point for the workshop – so, Metzger decided to create a new blog to act both as a welcome screen for the workshop and as her portfolio.

This blog contains a single post explaining the goals for the workshop and links to the pieces that make up her LIS portfolio: a Web project, a pathfinder and subject guide, and her Beat Generation Women blog (<http://womenbeats.blogspot.com/>).

Because of her experience with blogs and blogging, her interviewers asked her how the Lafayette library could use blogs. Her answers, it seems, were more than acceptable -- Metzger was offered and accepted the position.

While Metzger said she's not sure she wants to continue blogging, she sees how blogs are useful for professional development. Metzger reads a few blogs to keep herself up-to-date professionally, such as "Library Stuff" (<http://www.librarystuff.net>), whose author "is a good mixture between librarian and techie. I can understand what he's talking about." She also likes ACRLog (<http://www.acrlblog.org/>), run by the Association of College & Research Libraries. "They're bringing me good stuff about higher education," she said. Another favorite, ResourceShelf (<http://www.resourceshelf.com>), by search guru Gary Price, alerts Metzger to potential reference sources.

Metzger begins to pack up her Boston apartment on a late January morning as she prepares for her move to Pennsylvania. She is excited about this new journey in her life. Looking back at her relationship with blogs and blogging Metzger admits, "I'm not a techie at heart. But I have a feeling I'm going to be someone who people come to about blogging."

Are you a GSLIS student with a technology tale to tell? We'd love to speak with you about your experiences, potentially for use in a future InfoLink article! Drop us a line at alison.cody@simmons.edu or olivia.gatti@simmons.edu.

Article by Alison Cody and Olivia Gatti

By the time Alison Cody entered GSLIS in fall 2005, she was maintaining her blog daily and actively reading several others, many focused on librarianship. "I discovered that there are a ton of librarians out there blogging about their libraries and their interests within the field. I found several that I liked, but became annoyed at having to visit each one each day to see if there was any new content." The simple act of staying current with your favorites -- not to mention your favorites' favorites -- can quickly drown would-be visitors in too much information.

Cody's solution to managing her growing blog circuit was to set up an RSS aggregator. RSS (Really Simple Syndication), is a technology employed by many blogs and an increasing number of Web sites, most notably news organizations like *The Boston Globe* and CNN. Getting the RSS subscription, or feed, for a Web site is much like getting a magazine subscription. Rather than going to the newsstand every week, it gets delivered to your home. And instead of visiting a site to check for new content, you can subscribe to the RSS feed. Readers of blogs and Web sites that use RSS catch and read the feeds

in applications known as RSS aggregators. The user enters the information (typically a URL) for the subscription, and at preset intervals the aggregator checks the feed for updated content, and displays any new posts or news articles. There are several different

types of RSS aggregators including web browser applications, such as Mozilla's Firefox and Apple's Safari, or web-based aggregators, which allow a user to log into his or her account from any computer with an Internet connection.

For more details and instructions on how to set up an RSS aggregator, visit <http://www.simmons.edu/gslis/academics/programs/doctoral/phdmip/news/rssinstructions.shtml>. A great

resource for anyone who wants to set up an RSS aggregator to read librarian blogs is "Bloglines for Librarians" at <http://joy.mollprojects.com/myprojects/rss/quickrss.html>. And stay tuned for details about a workshop being held by the Simmons chapter of ASIS&T in March. You'll be able to explore the various types of RSS aggregators and learn how to set one up.

Blog Terminology

Blog

Short for Web log; a journal on the Web

Blogosphere

The social phenomenon that encompasses all blogs, or a large number of blogs within a particular social network.

CSS

Cascading Style Sheets

RSS

Really Simple Syndication.

Web 2.0

A more interactive Web, where people participate, comment, organize, evaluate, and edit the content available. Think Wikipedia.

Blogging resources

More sites to check out:

<http://www.weblogg-ed.com/>
<http://www.blogwithoutalibrary.net/>
<http://www.futureofthebook.org/>
<http://ramblingon.wordpress.com>
<http://www.technorati.com>
<http://www.theshiftedlibrarian.com>
<http://www.tametheweb.com>
<http://womenbeats.blogspot.com>
<http://metzgeratlafayette.blogspot.com>

50% off Continuing Education

All GSLIS Students receive a 50% discount on GSLISCE Workshops. Here are some of the workshop offerings for March 2006:

Online Book Discussion
Creating Web Based Tutorials: Teaching and Learning Online
Building Career Collections and Services
The Effective Use of Teams in Medical Libraries
Understanding Finances and Contract Negotiation
Dreamweaver 1 and 2 for Information Professionals
Reading Pictures: The Art of Visual Literacy

View a full course list with descriptions at <http://www.simmons.edu/gslis/continuinged/workshops/>.

March Events

Monday, March 6, Wednesday, March 8 and Thursday, March 9, GSLIS Alternative Spring Break. Volunteer at the Farragut Elementary School for a half day, full day, or all three days. Interested? Email Nell Mone at nell.mone@simmons.edu or sign up in the GSLIS student lounge.

Wednesday, March 8, Gary Price Presents “Web Searching Beyond Google”. Renowned librarian and search expert, Gary Price, will talk about the future of search engine companies, the invisible Web, and keeping up with the ever-changing search landscape. He will also discuss his unusual path as a non-traditional librarian. He runs a consulting service, is the editor of ResourceShelf, an electronic newsletter for online researchers, and co-author of *The Invisible Web: Uncovering Information Sources Search Engines Can't See*. Refreshments will be served. Sponsored by the Special Libraries Association at Simmons College, the Simmons College Library, and the GSLIS. With special thanks to NELINET. Room C101, 1st floor, MCB. 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 23, Public Library Association Reception. Simmons GSLIS and the MBLC are sponsoring a reception for the Public Library Association. Directions: <http://www.suffolk.edu/map.html>. Suffolk University, 5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.

More information about these and other events can be found at <http://my.simmons.edu/gslis/resources/calendars/events.shtml>.

GSLIS SOAR registration for summer 2006

will be Monday, March 20 - Sunday, March 26, 2006. Specific times will be announced via GSLIS_Info and posted on the GSLIS registration Web site (<http://my.simmons.edu/gslis/courses/registration/current-students.shtml>) at a later date.

Don't forget—fall registration happens in April this year! Stay tuned for more details.

New Dean's Fellow



Photo by Olivia Gatti

David Dwiggins is the new Dean's Fellow for Technology Support at GSLIS. A native of the Washington, D.C. area, he earned undergraduate degrees in English and magazine journalism from Syracuse University, and a master's degree in technology management from the University of Maryland University College.

He comes to Simmons from *The Tennessean* newspaper in Nashville, where he oversaw newsroom technology and managed the paper's library and archives. He helped launch its first news

Web site, managed logistics for its coverage of Super Bowl XXXIV in Atlanta, built an emergency newsroom after a tornado destroyed a sister paper, and created *The Tennessean's* NewsSpot newsroom intranet.

His experience in the library and archives of the newspaper led to his interest in the field of archives, and in January he entered the dual Archives/History program at Simmons. He currently lives in Somerville.

Folks on the Move

Professor **Ching-chih Chen** traveled to Bangkok, Thailand, in December 2005 to give the keynote speech at the International Conference on Asian Digital Libraries.

The speech was entitled “Thai's Invaluable Memory Celebrated via Global Memory Net” and marked the addition of numerous archival photos of the Thai royal family to the Thai Memory portion of the GMN. (The grandmother of the princess attended Simmons between 1917 and 1920.) These photos were sent to Simmons from the Thai Palace Archive and Thai Library Association and were scanned into the GMN by Simmons archivists, **Donna Webber** and **Jason Wood**.



Pimrumpai Premssmit [LS'87, LSD'90], director of libraries at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand (left); HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn (center); Ching-chih Chen (right)

GSLIS Staff Transitions

As of March 1, 2006, Professor Allen Smith is now the Associate Dean for the Curriculum and Ms. Jennifer Doyle is the Director of Curriculum and Communications.

GSLIS Students: Register for Alumni Day!

GSLIS Students: Register now to attend GSLIS Alumni and Professional Development Day! This is a wonderful opportunity for current students to network with GSLIS alumni and other professionals in the field. Students can attend for the reduced student registration fee of \$20. Visit the registration page at: http://www.alumnet.simmons.edu/olc/pub/SNS/events/event_order.cgi?tmpl=events&event=1970345.0.

For more information on Alumni and Professional Development Day, visit Alumnet http://www.alumnet.simmons.edu/olc/pub/SNS/events/event_order.cgi?tmpl=events&event=1970345.0. Brochures are available in the Matarazzo Student Lounge.

InfoLink

InfoLink is the monthly newsletter of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons College. Its purpose is to provide school- and career-related information and to foster community among the many diverse people who make up the school.

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Note that views expressed by contributors to the newsletter are not necessarily the views of the newsletter, GSLIS, or Simmons College. The editors reserve the right to edit material submitted for publication.

Copy deadline for the April issue is Monday, March 13, 2006.