RSS Feeds and Weblogs Thames Valley Health Libraries Network Study Day

Tom Roper

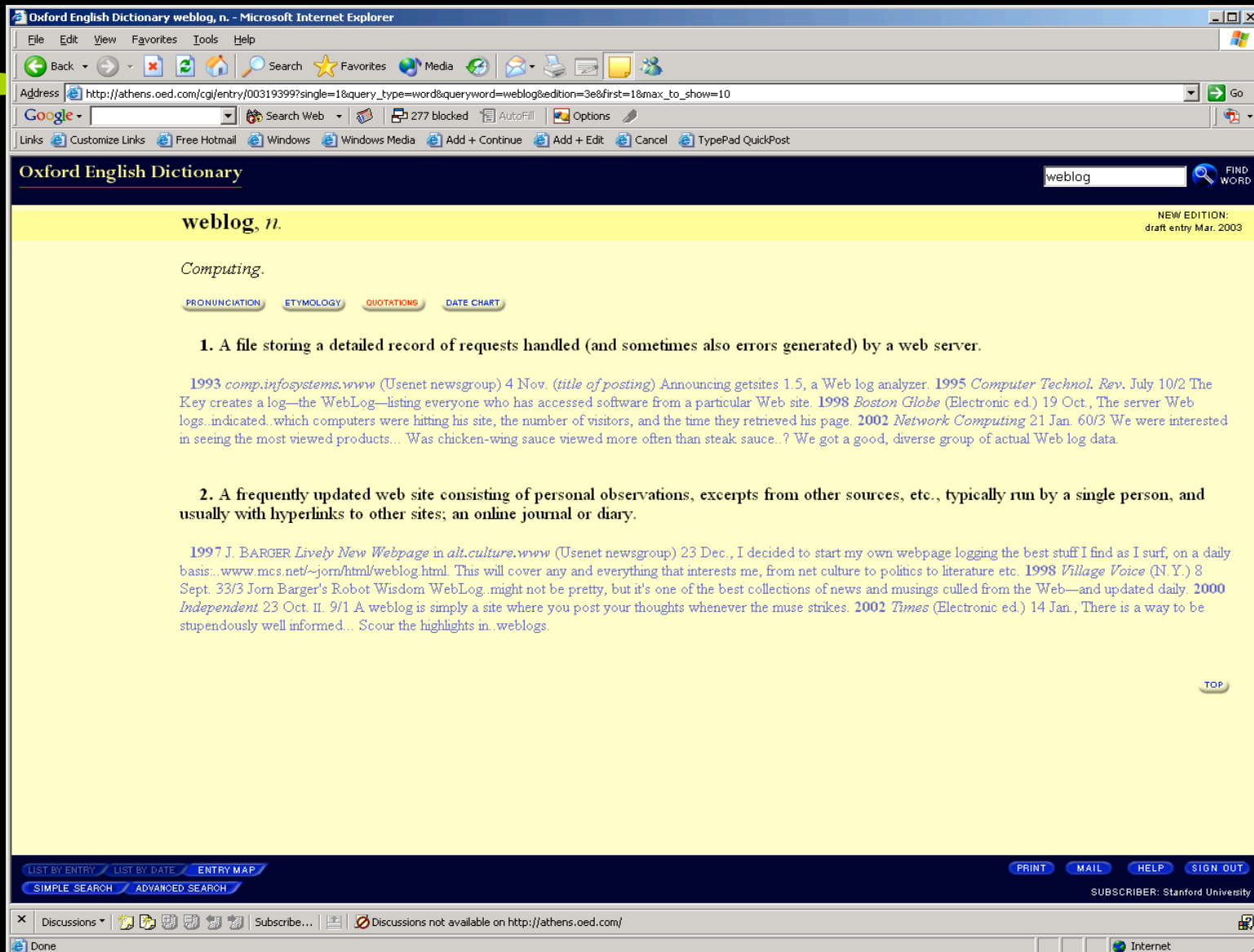Thames Valley 13 December 2006

I shall cover…

- ✓ What are blogs and RSS feeds?
- ✓ Their history and evolution
- ✓ Why blog?
- ✓ Why read blogs?
- ✓ How library and information services might use blogs and RSS?
- ✓ Let's blog now

My education in blogging

- ✓ Professional:
  - ✓ current awareness service for medical educators using blog to deliver: http://www.medev.ac.uk/blogs/medicaleducation/
  - ✓ METRO project: http://metro2.blogspot.com
- ✓ Personal: desire to inflict myself on the world: http://tomroper.typepad.com
  - ✓ Blogger
  - ✓ iBlog
  - ✓ TypePad

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The OED says…

Oxford English Dictionary weblog, n. - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Address http://athens.oed.com/cgi/entry/00319399?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=weblog&edition=3e&first=1&max_to_show=10 Go

Google | Search Web | 277 blocked | AutoFill | Options

Links Customize Links Free Hotmail Windows Windows Media Add + Continue Add + Edit Cancel TypePad QuickPost

Oxford English Dictionary weblog FIND WORD

weblog, *n.* NEW EDITION: draft entry Mar. 2003

Computing.

PRONUNCIATION ETYMOLOGY QUOTATIONS DATE CHART

1. A file storing a detailed record of requests handled (and sometimes also errors generated) by a web server.

1993 *comp.infosystems.www* (Usenet newsgroup) 4 Nov. (*title of posting*) Announcing getsites 1.5, a Web log analyzer. **1995** *Computer Technol. Rev.* July 10/2 The Key creates a log—the WebLog—listing everyone who has accessed software from a particular Web site. **1998** *Boston Globe* (Electronic ed.) 19 Oct., The server Web logs..indicated..which computers were hitting his site, the number of visitors, and the time they retrieved his page. **2002** *Network Computing* 21 Jan. 60/3 We were interested in seeing the most viewed products... Was chicken-wing sauce viewed more often than steak sauce..? We got a good, diverse group of actual Web log data.

2. A frequently updated web site consisting of personal observations, excerpts from other sources, etc., typically run by a single person, and usually with hyperlinks to other sites; an online journal or diary.

1997 J. BARGER *Lively New Webpage* in *alt.culture.www* (Usenet newsgroup) 23 Dec., I decided to start my own webpage logging the best stuff I find as I surf, on a daily basis:..www.mcs.net/~jorn/html/weblog.html. This will cover any and everything that interests me, from net culture to politics to literature etc. **1998** *Village Voice* (N.Y.) 8 Sept. 33/3 Jorn Barger's Robot Wisdom WebLog..might not be pretty, but it's one of the best collections of news and musings culled from the Web—and updated daily. **2000** *Independent* 23 Oct. II. 9/1 A weblog is simply a site where you post your thoughts whenever the muse strikes. **2002** *Times* (Electronic ed.) 14 Jan., There is a way to be stupendously well informed... Scour the highlights in..weblogs.

TOP

LIST BY ENTRY LIST BY DATE ENTRY MAP PRINT MAIL HELP SIGN OUT

SIMPLE SEARCH ADVANCED SEARCH SUBSCRIBER: Stanford University

Discussions Subscribe... Discussions not available on http://athens.oed.com/

Done Internet

Blogging

- ✓ Blog=weblog (first used December 1997)

- ✓ In its purest form, a log of sites visited

- ✓ A definition: "frequently modified web pages in which dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence" (Herring 2004)

What are blogs?

- ✓ Posts in reverse chronological order
- ✓ Comments
- ✓ Searchable archives by date and subject
- ✓ Blogroll
- ✓ Ease of use
- ✓ RSS feed

What are blogs (2)?

- ✓ Herring et al:
  - ✓ Journalism
  - ✓ Filter
  - ✓ Knowledge blogs
  - ✓ Self-expression

What are blogs (3)?

- ✓ Possible analogies:
  - ✓ Diaries
  - ✓ Commonplace books
  - ✓ Pamphlets
  - ✓ Letters
  - ✓ Posters
  - ✓ All of the above and more
- ✓ "All human life is there"

Taxonomy of blogs (Amy Gahran)

- ✓ Link-only
- ✓ Link-blurb
- ✓ Brief remarks
- ✓ List-style postings
- ✓ Short articles
- ✓ Long articles
- ✓ Series

Some landmarks

- ✓ First blog: 1996?
- ✓ Hosted blogging 2000:
  - ✓ Pitas
  - ✓ Blogger
  - ✓ Groksoup
- ✓ US: 9/11, Iraq war, 2004 US presidential election
- ✓ Britain: 2005 election, 7/7, newspapers (Guardian)
- ✓ Technorati indexes 57 million, of which 2/3 current

To illustrate…

- ✓ http://www.pepysdiary.com/
- ✓ http://tomroper.typepad.com/
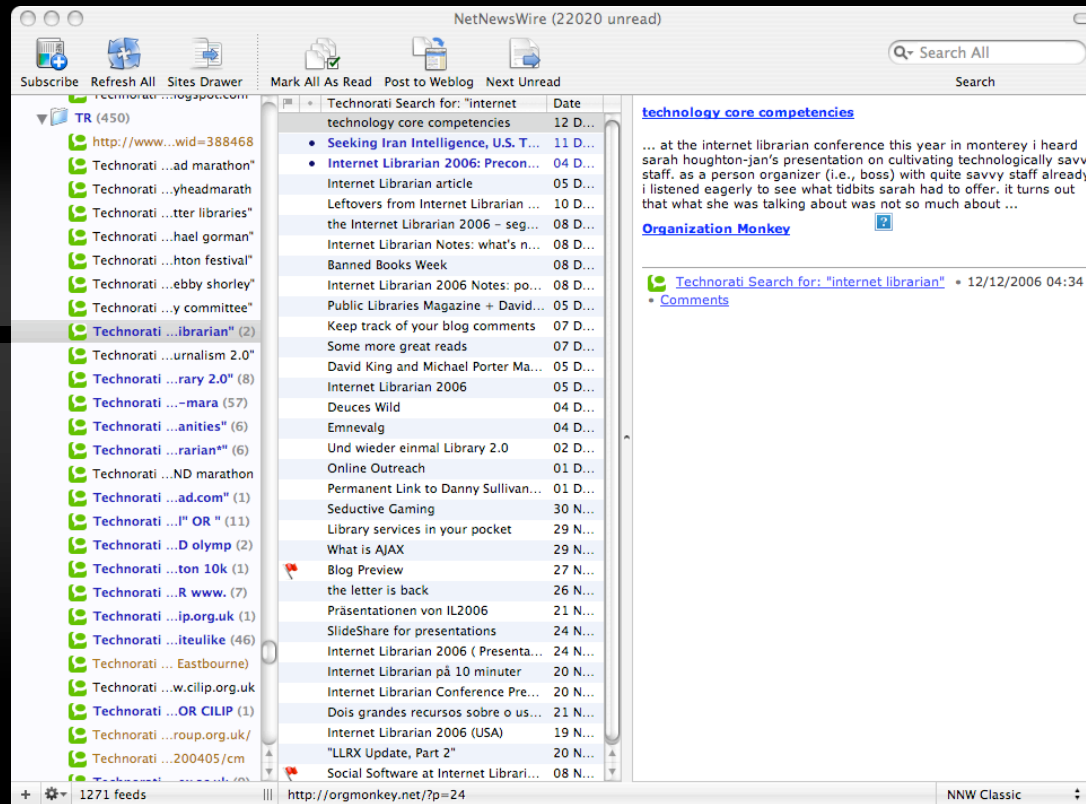- ✓ http://tscott.typepad.com/tsp/

What is RSS?

- ✓ Rich Site Summary

  Or Really Simple Syndication

  Or RDF Site Syndication

  - RSS 0.9, 1.0, 2.0, RDF, Atom….

  Some RSS in its natural habitat

What is RSS (2)?

- ✓ XML-based

- ✓ Machine readable but not human readable

  - ✓ Hence newsreaders:

  online: eg <u>Bloglines</u>, Google Reader

  offline: NetNewsWire

NetNewsWire

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Why should libraries use them?

- ✓ Effective information dissemination
- ✓ Human face of lis services
- ✓ Create trust and community
- ✓ Become leaders

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Why blog/read blogs?

- Self-expression
- Obtain feedback
- Repository for information/links
- Share experience
- Build a community

- Niche interests
- Participate
- Diverse views/bypass MSM
- Instant comment
- Aggregate
- Community

Some library applications

- ✓ Current awareness
- ✓ RSS feeds from OPACs, commercial databases, ToCs etc
- ✓ Book reviews/journal clubs

- ✓ Projects/plans
- ✓ Podcasts
- ✓ Integrate other social software tools

Dos and don'ts (an arbitrary list)

- ✓ Use own voice
- ✓ Link
- ✓ Answer questions
- ✓ Act on feedback
- ✓ Post regularly
- ✓ Be brief
- ✓ Be human
- ✓ Be interesting

- ✓ Self-promote
- ✓ Lie
- ✓ Talk like marketing
- ✓ Post erratically
- ✓ Be dull

Let's build one

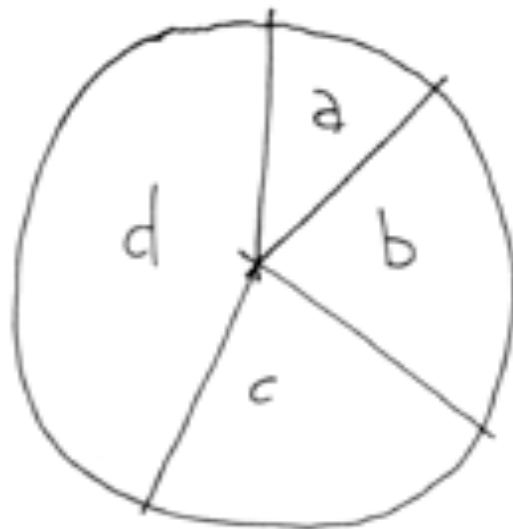- ✓ http://www.blogger.com

Find blogs

- ✓ Technorati: http://www.technorati.com

- ✓ Mainstream search engines

For more

- ✓ http://tomroper.typepad.com

The blogger's world view (by Hugh at gapingvoid.com)