

# Blogging thoughts: personal publication as an online research tool

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## Introduction

Once upon a time, weblogs were automatically collated overviews of data about visitors to a web server. That's changed. Nowadays the texts called weblogs are definitely not written by a computer. Weblogs today are subjective annotations to the web rather than statistics about it.

Weblogs, or *blogs* as they are affectionately termed, are frequently updated websites, usually personal, with commentary and links. Link lists are as old as home pages, but a blog is far from a static link list or home page. A blog consists of many relatively short posts, usually time-stamped, and organised in reverse chronology so that a reader will always see the most recent post first. The first weblogs were seen as filters to the Internet; interesting links to sites the reader might not have seen, often with commentary from the blogger.

Though weblogs have many different themes, looks and writing styles, formally the genre is clear. Brief, dated posts collected on one web page are the main formal criteria. Evan Williams, one of the creators of the popular blogging tool Blogger, is succinct in his definition:

To me, the blog concept is about three things: Frequency, Brevity, and Personality. (..) This clarification has evolved over time, but I realised early on that what was significant about blogs was the format — not the content.<sup>1</sup>

This paper is about the use of weblogs in research. We are both researchers of online games, texts and culture, and most of our material is

gathered online. A lot of our research is done online. Unsurprisingly, we came across weblogs when surfing the net. Discovering how simple Blogger makes blogging, we started our own weblogs. Jill Walker started *jill/txt* in October 2000, and Torill Mortensen started *Thinking with my fingers* not long after. The weblogs were originally used as a way to keep our focus while online, serving as constant little reminders of the real topics we were supposed to write about. They soon developed beyond being digital ethnographers' journals and into a hybrid between journal, academic publishing, storage space for links and site for academic discourse.

Today our weblogs are among the most popular channels for frequent exchange of information between the members of what Mark Bernstein, Chief scientist at Eastgate Systems and writer of a weblog bearing his own name,<sup>2</sup> dubbed 'The Scandinavian-flavoured cluster' of weblogs concerned with online communication and games.<sup>3</sup> The generous spirit of blogging permits the writer to leave behind what Anders Fagerjord so fittingly names a *Surftrail*<sup>4</sup> for others to follow through the World Wide Web, directing colleagues and others who might come by to areas of interest. And it's a trail annotated with everything from short comments, as is typical of Lisbeth Klastrup in *Klastrup's Cataclysms*<sup>5</sup>, to longer descriptions or even reviews, as is the style of Anja Rau's less frequent posts in her *Flickwerk*.<sup>6</sup>

Where home page remains a fixed noun, the word blog has rapidly become a verb as well. Bloggers have been likened to journalists, or perhaps better, editors; they might as well be compared to researchers. To blog is an activity similar in many ways to the work of the researcher. A weblogger filters a mass of information, choosing the items that interest her or that are relevant to her chosen topic, commenting upon them, demonstrating connections between them and analysing them.

When we started our weblogs, we saw them mainly as tools for focusing, for exchanging information and being part of a discussion which potentially extends beyond the academic community. While Jill hoped to interest more people in the aesthetics of online stories and games, Torill deliberately used her weblog as an introduction to explain the research to players of games – potential informants – and let them follow the development of the thesis itself. This eliminated some of the mystery and tension related to research, and has on several occasions made it easier to cooperate with online role-players: the weblog establishes an accepted online presence which proves that the researcher is real to the digital space and not just a visitor with no knowledge. An personal online presence legiti-

mates the online researcher much more efficiently than academic affiliation, flesh-world addresses or phone-numbers. To skilled online role-players, it's easier to fake a flesh-world personae than to maintain a consistent, long-term online presence. It also happens to give street credibility.

Most importantly, our weblogs became tools with which to think about our research, its values, connections and links to other aspects of the world. They altered the way in we approached online communication, and have influenced the writing of both dissertations. This is the motivation for this article: a need to look at what weblogs do to our academic thinking.

## Notes on our method

Weblogs have become increasingly popular over the last two years, spreading rhizomatically to all spheres of the net: private, academic, cultural, professional, commercial and pornographic. An old weblog dates from the year 2000; an ancient one was started in the last millennium.<sup>7</sup> Having participated in this movement, we have chosen to make full use of our own experience as bloggers and participants in the blogging community in researching this article, rather than conducting rigorous statistical surveys. This is a problematic position for a researcher under most paradigms: it defies the ideal of the not involved observer, and as such also contradicts the argument that research should be objective. It is however not an alien thought to the academic community, as Reason and Bradbury<sup>8</sup> express in their description of the goals of Action Research:

It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourish of individual persons and their communities.<sup>9</sup>

To the extent that it's possible to speak of online communities, bloggers create or maintain them. The post of Lisbeth Klastrop on the one year anniversary of her blog February 15<sup>th</sup> 2002 illustrates this:

Also, quite a few bloggers have joined the community since I started - and there is a nice sense of fellow exchanges and cross-postal reading between people like Jill (the mother-blogger), Torill, Hilde, Gonzalo, Anja, Adrian, Frank, Laurel, Elin, Carsten, and Lars. Anders is new on the blog, but will definitely be read. Jesper still refuses to blog, but at least now he is looking over our shoulders (\*waves\*). As is Ragnhild

(\*another wave\*). And some of the Finns occasionally. Jan is a trusty reader too (\*wave towards Jylland\*). As is the omnipresent Mark Bernstein, who must be the most avid reader in the world ... (\*respect\*).

Since we are both part of these communities, and participate in, develop and discover them as we go, there can be no distance between researchers and the object of study, there can be no detached observation or cool clinical dissection of the topic. There would be very few weblogs of online research for us to study if we were to abstain from studying those of ourselves and this cluster.

There is a considerable amount of popular writing on weblogs,<sup>10</sup> but there is to date no published research on the topic, neither looking upon blogs as an aspect of digital culture, as a media phenomenon nor as a method or a publication tool for researchers. Likewise, not many academics write weblogs yet. When discussed in the media, weblogs are generally treated as belonging to popular culture or perhaps as being a form of folk journalism. There are many professional weblogs, though. As noted by early followers of the blogging movement, most of these are written by people who work online (web designers, software developers, and usability experts for instance). Researchers like ourselves who work with digital culture are then predictably early adopters of the technology. As professionals in more and more fields are starting to use weblogs we may see academics in other areas than digital culture enter the terrain.

Several projects explore the use of weblogs in education, such as (obviously) *Weblogs in Education*, *Edublog* and *Weblogg-Ed*. These sites focus on the practical uses of online logs in teaching: the pedagogical effect of letting students publish and the potential gains in cooperation. At the time of writing (March 2002) they are mainly collections of links and examples of experiments conducted with weblogs, and are obviously works in progress.<sup>11</sup>

Many professionals keep weblogs, and they often use their blogs to reflect upon their work, to follow developments in the field and to publish ideas. Information architects<sup>12</sup> and graphic designers are among the most prominent webbloggers, and they often use their weblogs in a highly sophisticated manner. Much of the material processed and discussed in these weblogs is clearly research. University academics have been slower to adapt to the form.

Statistics as to number of blogs and links to and between them are easy to find. One system for indexing links on weblogs is *Blogdex*, a project run by the MIT Media Lab in Boston. Blogdex gathers and analyses connections between weblogs based on links between them. From this information, the system generates lists of the most popular sites (popularity in the blogging community is here determined by links rather than by readers) and plots social networks between them. However, Blogdex isn't an absolute measure, and not all weblogs are indexed.

Given the lack of previous research on weblogs, and of other researchers using blogs, we have chosen to base this paper on our personal experience, as well as placing our observations and experiences of the use of weblogs in general in a theoretical framework, drawing on media theory, rhetoric, reader-response theory and hypertext-theory, a universe of theoretical approaches which opens the article up in too many directions for us to cover within the scope of this work. We choose to focus on certain topics: online rhetoric, the style of blogs, academic weblogs: positioning research progression between public and private, and writing and thinking: how writing styles affect thinking styles.

In many ways the questions we want to ask here relate to Michael Heim's approach to the ways in which word processing affects our thought processes. Our question assumes that weblogs are more than simple tools and that the way we write in a blog reveals something about how we think that would not be explicit in another medium. If we think of Blogger or Microsoft Office as a tool like a pen, 'to ask whether our thought process is affected by word processing is like asking whether using lead pencils will make my letters heavy and morose or whether blue ink will make my thoughts blue.'<sup>13</sup> We are however already familiar with the hierarchy of pens and pencils: the pencil as the tool of the sketch, the temporary scratch of lines either for drawing or writing. While we work with a pencil, words or lines can be removed and replaced, and the draft is filled with arrows pointing to where chapters would change place or tiny letters where a whole sentence needs to be put into the finished text. The blue ink of the fountain pen demands structured writing, every stroke is final and each letter carries weight as to the presentation of the finished work. At school we were taught that errors had to be not scratched out but carefully lined out, using a ruler to make a straight line through our shameful error. This makes the drafting and the more or less careful calligraphy of the final version two distinctly different processes, in our minds as well as on paper.

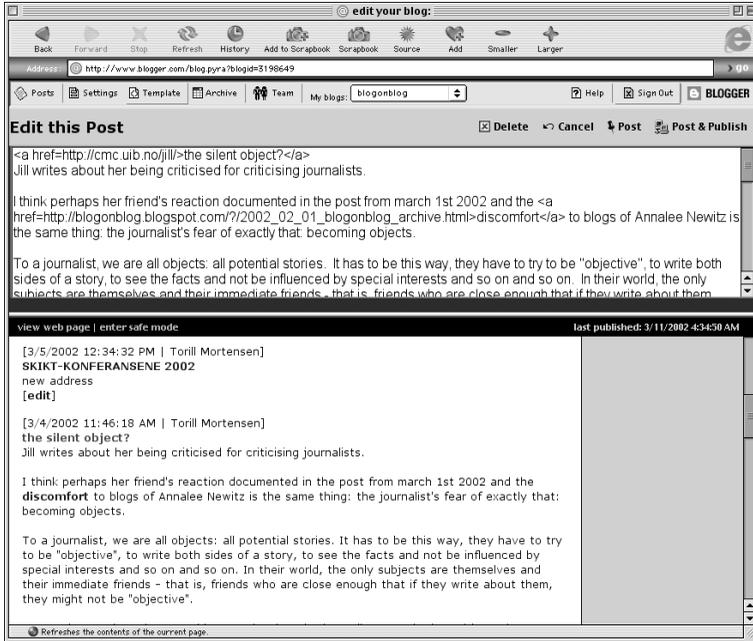
We are not positing that writing a weblog will change the articles we publish in scholarly journals. We do argue that blogging influences the way you think about thinking, and that it may change the process of research. To some extent it might even change the method.

## Blogging software

The word blog, now so popular, is commonly agreed to have been coined as late as in 1999, by Peter Merholz.<sup>14</sup> That year also marks the start of the genre's speedy growth, which became more and more rapid as different tools made blogging simple. Blogger, Pita, Greymatter, Manila, Diaryland, Big Blog Tool and others<sup>15</sup> offered free automated web publishing and often server space to go with it. Blogger has been the unequivocally most popular and most influential weblogging tool. Blogger was created by the company Pyra as a sidestep to the project they were really planning to develop, and became spectacularly popular, now boasting several hundred thousand users. Though Blogger initially failed to make a profit and had to lose all but one staff member in January 2001, the tool is still extremely popular and has recently been released in a for-pay version that offers additional features to the free system.

Blogger has features that very much affect the way in which we work with weblogs.<sup>16</sup> Blogger is set up to work over a web interface. The program and your writing are stored on a distant server. You log into blogger.com, write your post, press the publish button, and your words are uploaded to your website, automatically formatted and added to previous posts with the layout and style that you've set up. Being web-based, Blogger makes it easiest to write for your weblog while you're online. A 'blog this' button can be added to the toolbar of your browser, easing the connection between online reading and writing – if you click the button while viewing a web page, Blogger will automatically set up a writing space for you with a link to that page and space for you to write your comments.

We started our weblogs using Blogger, and also use it for [blogonblog.blogspot.com](http://blogonblog.blogspot.com), the blog we have used in the process of researching and writing this article. Some months ago, Jill Walker stopped using Blogger and started using Tinderbox for writing and publishing her personal weblog.



*Figure 1: A recent example of our blogging.*

Tinderbox is an application designed primarily for writing, publishing and analysing notes, and it can also be used to publish your notes online, for instance as a weblog.<sup>17</sup> Tinderbox lives on your personal computer rather than being web-based. It allows much more complex ways of writing and linking notes than Blogger does, but lacks the immediacy of Blogger's instant publication. In writing in Tinderbox there's a stronger inclination towards the private, the individual and enclosed space than there is in Blogger. This is partly due to the possibility of keeping some notes private, which is impossible in Blogger. Also the map views available in Tinderbox allow for spatial and colourful organisation that is intended for the writer, and that cannot easily be transferred to the web. This is a tool much more slanted towards the process of writing than towards the reader, though publishing can be done very elegantly with a little work from the writer. Blogger, on the other hand, resides on a server and its users can post new comments to their weblogs from any computer that has a web browser connected to

the web. This offers a different kind of flexibility to Tinderbox, which limits you to your own computer.

Methodology is not usually related to such quotidian details as the mechanics of the tools you use to write in, although sociology has been very aware of the potential of software in processing quantitative data. In the humanities, we are used to treating our technology as transparent. Discussions of technology tend to be about storage and viewing: the concern about old films which have become spontaneously combustible, the loss of old radio programs due to the re-use of the magnetic tapes they were recorded on, the freedom of replaying television programs when they can be taped to video, allowing researchers to subject them to relaxed and minute analysis.

One of our main claims in this chapter is that writing and the way we express thoughts change when you use different tools. Though different blogging tools produce web pages that appear the same at first sight, using a new tool can have many unexpected effects, as Jill chronicled in her blog:

'I miss those quick little remarks', said Thomas over lunch. 'What happened?' Ah. I do write differently in Tinderbox. Something about the size of the writing space which invites more words. And something about the feel of it being a serious place where each post takes space on my screen. And something about the immediacy of Blogger where a button on my browser instantly lets me 'blog this' - I miss that button. I always have Tinderbox open so writing is quick but still not quite as 'chatty' as the 'blog this' button in my browser.<sup>18</sup>

## Between the private and public

This anecdote demonstrates the way in which weblogs straddle the boundaries between publication and process, between writing towards others and writing for oneself. A weblog is always both for oneself and for one's readers. If it were only for oneself, a private diary would be more useful. If it were only for readers, and not a tool for oneself, a more polished and finished form of publication would probably be more appropriate.<sup>19</sup>

Blogs exist right on this border between what's private and what's public, and often we see that they disappear deep into the private sphere and reveal far too much information about the writer. When a

blog is good, it contains a tension between the two spheres, as delicate a balancing act as the conversation of any experienced guest of the French salons of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Theory of the Public Sphere is one of the most popular supports for the role of the news media as guardians of the democracy and the rights of the public to be informed. Jürgen Habermas<sup>20</sup> did not claim, however, that the modern media are particularly well-adjusted to the ideal of a rational discourse in the public sphere. In his writings on the public sphere Habermas positions the public conversations geographically to the salons and the coffee-houses. All social classes were not included in this public, which consisted of the *bourgeois*: officials, scholars, pastors, with some overlapping to the still influential classes of craftsmen and small merchants: 'in the salons of the fashionable ladies, noble as well as bourgeois, sons of princes and counts associated with sons of watchmakers and shopkeepers.'<sup>21</sup> The public sphere of political and cultural discourse exists between the private sphere of economy and the sphere of public authority, in a position of negotiation between the two: 'In this stratum, which more than any other was affected *and* called upon by mercantilist policies, the state authorities evoked a resonance leading the *publicum*, the abstract counterpart of public authority, into an awareness of itself as the latter's opponent, that is, as the public of the now emerging *public sphere of civil society*.'<sup>22</sup>

Habermas argues that the public sphere of the civil society has been colonised (or perhaps reclaimed) by a new nobility, politicians or stars known from the market of culture products who do not take part in the public sphere as much as present themselves in it. He calls this re-feeding. This is supposedly the case today: we have a public arena where we do not participate, but acclaim the antics of the real actors.

In this public of acclamation and performance, the real tension between the private and the public is gone: the private no longer has any real potential of influence, it has been made part of the public show: we know far too much about the sex-life of American presidents and other people with influence over our lives, and far too little about their thoughts, ideas and decisions, an argument Richard Sennet pursues in *The Fall of Public Man*.<sup>23</sup>

The salon existed on the borderline between the private and the public: it was situated in private homes, but part of the public sphere through being the site of the performance that was the salon-experience.

The three aspects of Habermas's public sphere based on the salons or coffeehouses were: not equality, but a *total disregard of status*, the *problematisation of areas that until then had not been questioned*, and the principle of the *public as inclusive, not exclusive*.<sup>24</sup>

## Public space expanded: personal publication

Weblogs stand where the salon did: between private and public. A blog is written by an individual and expresses the attitude and the conviction of its writer; it is strictly subjective though not necessarily intimate. This doesn't stop it from being in the public domain, and being concerned about questions which are in the domain of public authority. Each individual can use weblogs as he or she feels fit, there is no tyranny of news values<sup>25</sup> to decide what is worth writing about or, as the term is: what is worth blogging.

This new medium of personal expression is another expansion of the public sphere into the private. When the news became concerned with the business ventures of citizens, that was an intrusion in what had been considered a private sphere, as we can still discern in the use of the expression 'that's his business', business being an arena into which we should not pry. But the intrusion was not forced, it was invited, just as the salons were privately owned rooms open to the public. With the weblog the public is invited into the privacy of the diary of an individual. This individual can seduce, attack, manipulate, rant or expose herself – but most of the time what you find in weblogs is an attempt to say something about what concerns the writer. In some manner, the writer is putting his or her daily experiences into a larger context, discussing micro events in relation to the wider universe of events. The weblog connects the public arena with that of individuals. As individuals' filters to the public sphere around them, weblogs express the personality and interests of their writers as well as the news. In this way blogs are a continuous way of writing oneself, as Daniel Chandler describes us writing ourselves through our traditional home pages.<sup>26</sup>

September 11<sup>th</sup> was an example of how personal opinion and experience needed a medium of communication that was not dependent on or obedient to the public authorities. With the aggressive stance of the US Government against all terror, defining terror as acts of

aggression committed by Afghanistan Muslims, weblogs filled with shock and later discussion. The discussions in the weblogs were not in accordance with the authorities. Despite the univocal grief and shock at the plane-crashes, the online public did not blindly support the decision to attack Afghanistan or the changes to US legislation, just as they did not accept only one side of the story about what happened in Afghanistan. Online personal writers saw the war on Afghanistan and US military politics from many different perspectives.<sup>27</sup> Instead of coming to a consensus opinion, as much of the traditional media did, weblogs showed the dissent among individuals. Bloggers were very vocal about their opinions and reactions to September 11<sup>th</sup> and the aftermath. On the day of the attacks, there were 22% more posts to Blogger users' weblogs than on an average day.<sup>28</sup> In the weeks following the focus shifted from personal experiences and anxieties to opinions on the war. In addition to chronicling the regular news, many alternative news sources were linked to, and discussions raged between individual blogs and on community blogs like Metafilter. The myriad of blogging voices never accepted the news as a US Army promotional event as has been shown happened in the news coverage of the Gulf War in 1991.<sup>29</sup>

## Autonomy & openness

Weblogs are densely interlinked. This anchors blogs in the public arena, as part of a communal discourse. Posts to a blog can be very short and unpretentious. The threshold for publishing a single post is very low. This allows single, small, insignificant ideas to be expressed and formulated. Sometimes these thoughts are left as they are. A paragraph is enough and there is no more needed. Other times, the ideas grow. Someone links their site to the first post, comments on it, and a conversation grows forth. The initial post, or follow-ups, are linked to a web site or a newspaper article or something else. Links are like roots, tendrils, reaching out between fragments, creating a context for bits and pieces that at first glance may seem to be unconnected fragments.

The individual weblog itself also creates a context for posts. Tom Matrullo compares blogs to *loci amoeni*: safe, idyllic, enclosed gardens where heroes of romance literature would recover from the battles of the outside world.

The blog takes on some of the characteristics of the enclosed Renaissance garden, the interior plenitude of the autonomous voice reflecting upon and responding to other voices. (..) [I]f one goes back and looks into the worlds of folks like Ariosto, Tasso, Cervantes, etc., one begins to see that the gardens in their works are places of rebirth where the battered warriors briefly step outside the battle to re-collect themselves.<sup>30</sup>

This image encompasses the seemingly paradoxical mixture of private and public that is evident in weblogs. They are enclosed and private spaces that allow the writer to cultivate an autonomous voice. And yet they are visible, open spaces that encourage linking and conversations. Readers are welcome. Anyone can participate in the conversation simply by linking to the blog, though not everyone will be read.

Unlike *loci amoeni*, blogs are not shut off from the world. They cannot be materially changed by references to them, but the references are visible to those who search for them, allowing each weblog to become part of a conversation with others. Our own blogs are safe spaces. Though you cannot stop others from flaming or criticising you outside your blog, within it you have total editorial control.

## Academics and audiences

Writing and publishing weblogs allows scholars to have a different relationship with their audience than we have with readers of traditional academic articles. Although journalists and scholars both write 'articles', the academic article is a far cry from the journalistic article. What journalists call research is scoffed at among scholars, and the many standards of the form of the scholarly article, such as the Chicago Manual of Style Form Guide, Humanities Version, describe a form developed for displaying the rituals of academic research and the equally ritualised formula of academic publishing.

### Writing for our peers

An academic article is predominantly written for other scholars: our peers. In the humanities and social sciences there are a few items it must contain:

- a) References to theory, preferably updated, focused, wide enough to display a healthy variety to our reading but not so wide that we can be accused of being shallow.

- b) References to empiric data, or the object of our research. This should have enough status that we can justify spending our valuable time on it, either through being a classic, being something entirely new, or being popular enough to have social significance.
- c) An original and spirited discussion of how a) relates to b).

As long as our peers can see that we have met the demands of this formula, how we got to the point that our work and research can be presented in this manner is unimportant. Unless we are discussing methodology, how we *actually* made our discoveries is less important than the presentation of our findings, the discussion in relation to already existing theory and the defence of the hypothesis we derive from these results.

The modern researcher is not quite the old man in a dusty, smoky study behind a labyrinth of books, unable to relate to the rest of the world. Research is supposed to be related to contemporary topics, and preferably lead to results that can give new insights to more than a narrow group of specialists. But the formula of academic writing is not designed to reach audiences different from ourselves; on the contrary, these ritualised forms limit readership to those who are rigorously trained to read a certain style of writing. With the increasing flow of and access to information, academic communication is changing. Through being aware of new communication technologies we academics can be part of the new writing and take part in the development of these emerging genres, instead of marginalizing ourselves.

One defining characteristic of academic writing is the rigorous and formal citation practice. On the surface, weblogs seem like popular rather than academic non-fiction in that references are random and range from linking through written descriptions to casual mentions of sources. They however frequently refer as explicitly as do academic texts, though more simply by linking to a book's page at Amazon or to the web page referred to. Weblogs are written in order to share experiences rather than just display them, and for that the readers need to be able to find the books, music or web sites mentioned. Where academic writing is structured by the rules of the causal argument, a weblog is structured by time and the impulses of the day, documenting rather than structuring the trail of thought. The metaphors used in naming the sites: *thinking with my fingers*, *Surftrail*, *Klastrup's Cataclysms*, *Jill/txt*, all point to a structure not submitting to a academically accepted logic, but

to a personal logic. This difference is much like the distinction between a connotation and an association, except that in weblog clusters the associations are shared through the blogs and become part of the culture, and thus take on the characteristics of a connotation. Ideas and concepts, or *memes*, can spread swift as viruses from blog to blog.<sup>31</sup>

### Cultural Capital: the currency of scholars

The rigorous training of an academic is basically rewarded through cultural capital. As Pierre Bourdieu has shown,<sup>32</sup> cultural capital and economic capital can be mutually reinforcing, but are not prerequisites of each other. Academic criticism and public authority are also mutually reinforcing, leaving the scholar in a position of social status and influence, but at the same time impotent when it comes to offering criticism which can cause real system change.<sup>33</sup> From the isolated splendour of ivory towers within the labyrinth of universities and research centres, one path to independence of a structure where even criticism of the system reinforces the power of the system is through breaking out of the pattern: to embrace the form which does not confirm the authority.

As long as the energy of scholars is directed towards gaining status through the traditional channels of publishing and lecturing, the communication of scholarship will remain exclusive. To break the pattern, we need to think of new channels and new approaches to not only academic publishing, but to what merits publishing, at what point in the research process and how.<sup>34</sup>

The current reward system depends on certain formulas of academic publishing that encourage exclusivity and the fear of being robbed of thoughts and ideas. Since the real currency in the trade of academia is originality of thought and imaginative development of theories, there is more to lose than to gain in exposing your own ideas too early. The danger of having thoughts, ideas or questions copied before they have been published is not just a matter of some petty game between jealous professors with too little time on their hands, it's a very real matter of being robbed of the currency which measures academic success.

From this point of view a weblog that reveals the thoughts, arguments and questions of the scholar continuously during the process of research and long before academically accepted publication in print seems like a waste of perfectly good imagination and theory develop-

ment, an invitation to having your ideas looted. On the other hand, published and archived in the World Wide Web, the same ideas and thoughts are in fact published and as such better protected than if they were for instance given away over a cup of coffee, randomly at a conference.

As we were finishing this paper, a brief article on weblogs, 'Blog This', was published by Henry Jenkins, noted media scholar at MIT. This is the first article published on weblogs by an academic, as far as we have been able to ascertain. The thesis of Jenkins' article is that weblogs are powerful and may become even more influential by filling the current lull in commercialisation of the Internet. However, the words that he uses clearly show that he thinks of bloggers as a very different species to himself, and presumably, to the other academics he is primarily writing for:

Like cockroaches after nuclear war, online diarists rule an Internet strewn with failed dot coms. (...) Bloggers are turning the hunting and gathering, sampling and critiquing the rest of us do online into an extreme sport. We surf the Web; these guys snowboard it. Bloggers are the minutemen of the digital revolution.<sup>35</sup>

In the days after the article was published, bloggers have indeed 'blogged this', as Jenkins invited them to, bringing Jenkins' article to second place in the 'most linked to' URLs at Blogdex on 16 February 2002. Dave Winer wrote one of the earliest and most extensive commentaries on the article. He was clearly offended at being called a cockroach, and at Jenkins' obvious amazement at the power of bloggers. Winer defends himself and us other bloggers by angrily pointing out that in the late 70s, IBM didn't think the personal computing community was a threat either, and see where that led!<sup>36</sup> Jenkins would probably agree with Winer, but his style alienates the bloggers he praises. In his use of language, Jenkins treats bloggers as objects of research; and to some extent, as objects of wonder to be exhibited as extreme and freakish ('cockroaches', 'extreme sports'). This objectification and alienation is in stark contrast to bloggers' own perception of their community as made up of writing, verbal, influential subjects. The distancing techniques Jenkins uses, and his unfortunate choice of imagery, are typical for academics, who are so used to studying new technologies as exotic objects that they fail to see that they could be useful within academia itself. It is interesting that the pivotal event which made Jenkins write of weblogs, took place at a conference where weblogs were an important part of the conference publications.<sup>37</sup>

A few months ago, I was at the Camden Pop!Tech conference, and the guy sitting next to me was typing incessantly into his wireless laptop, making notes on the speakers, finding relevant links and then hitting the send key— instantly updating his Web site. No sooner did he do so than he would get responses back from readers around the country. He was a blogger.<sup>38</sup>

The speed with which the comments on keynotes and speeches were published, defies the control of peer-reviewed publications and other authoritative academic voices. Perhaps Henry Jenkins is worried that he might lose control. That would be a feasible fear for a senior and well respected scholar faced with the rapid changes of online discourse. In his article he even tries to take control of the responses of the people blogging his article, through the last couple of paragraphs where he firstly tells us all what different reactions we will respond with, and secondly asks if we will please blog him.

The cockroach reference in the quote was interestingly enough quickly altered after Jenkins' article *Blog This* had been blogged. Webloggers' offended reaction to the introduction made Jenkins request that his editor remove the offending phrase. He also emailed his students, describing his feelings about the reactions to the article, and permitted Elin Sjursen, an MIT graduate student and the writer of the blog *BloggerdyDoc*, to publish these emails in her blog.<sup>39</sup> Engaging in a discussion about blogs, Jenkins needed a public voice on the web in order to defend his position. Without an online platform to speak from, the traditional relationship of researcher to object became inverted as the bloggers he had written about started analysing their analyst. Trying to sustain the academic distance built into our traditional scholarly or popularising forms of publication can result in a greater loss of control than participating fully in these new forms of communication and conversation.

## Thinking with computers

Computers were deliberately designed to reflect and augment our thinking. Vannevar Bush, a prominent developer of analogue computers, argued for mechanical, non-hierarchical ways of organising information which would be more suited to the associative thought patterns of our brains. In a 1949 article tellingly titled 'As We May Think', Bush sketches designs for a device he called the memex. Though never realised, Bush's descriptions and thoughts about the memex are commonly

seen as direct ancestors of today's digital hypertext. Later, Doug Engelbart and his team developed the graphical user interface, the mouse and other elements that we take for granted in today's computer interfaces with the explicit aim of augmenting the human intellect. And yet technology is always unpredictable. Computers have changed our lives in many ways unforeseen by pioneers such as Bush and Engelbart.

In the last decade, sceptics have warned against the fragmentation of digital media. Supposedly, our attention spans are decreasing dramatically and we are losing our capacity for sustained reflection.<sup>40</sup> In some ways, weblogs can be seen to be a genre that reflects these concerns, confirming the sceptics' worst fears. To examine how weblogs work upon us it is necessary to scrutinise both the shape of this new genre and the ways in which the form encourages us to write and connect information.

## Writing & thinking in weblogs

Weblogs are collections of briefly formulated thoughts and ideas, very much in contrast to the lengthy, sustained argumentation we expect of a scholarly article. Instead weblogs focus on connections and on brief nuggets of thought. Links are vital to the genre; take the links out of a weblog and you are left with a web diary, a much more introverted and private form of writing.

A blogger can be seen as a modern version of Vannevar Bush's *trail blazers*: a person who links separate documents together, creating a trail or a path through them for others to follow.

There is a new profession of trail blazers, those who find delight in the task of establishing useful trails through the enormous mass of the common record. The inheritance from the master becomes, not only his additions to the world's record, but for his disciples the entire scaffolding by which they were erected.<sup>41</sup>

This task of connecting information that is already available is part of the work of research as well. For researchers who are studying online phenomena, the weblog is perfectly suited to this work of connecting dispersed discoveries, at the same time as a weblog allows us to share this found information, and to participate in discussions about it. Trail-blazing in a weblog can be an element of research and a dissemination of that research at the same time.

Weblogs link to external sources as well as to other weblogs. Extensive discussions take place between blogs, with links referring to previous comments in the conversation. These dialogues, or perhaps better, polylogues,<sup>42</sup> can seem complicated in that the structure is associative and idiosyncratic rather than hierarchical and externally ordered, and yet the constant links between the blogs make the discussion easy to follow – and more interestingly, easy to continue.

We post to our blogs as ideas come to us. Daily, hourly, weekly; the frequency varies but it is a writing that happens in bits and pieces, not in the long hours of thought that suit the clichéd image of the secluded scholar in the ivory tower. In this sense blogs are suited to the short attention span of our time that worries so many traditionalists.<sup>43</sup> Blogs are interstitial for the writer as for the reader. A post in a blog will often form a chain of thought with other posts and other fragments, but can stand alone as well.

Weblogs are written continuously and published without being revised. Though a tool like Blogger does allow a post to be written, saved and not published instantly, publishing a new post will automatically also publish the drafted post. The system assumes instant publication will be the norm. Sometimes webloggers will revise posts later and republish them; other bloggers make it a matter of principle to limit revision, preferring the immediacy and perhaps, in a sense, honesty, of the first expression of a thought. The tagline for Jouke Kleezenbaum's weblog *Notes, Quotes, Provocations and Other Fair Use*, for instance, is 'the mark of launch-and-learn publishing: corrections are generally made within 36 hours'.

This instant publication encourages spontaneous writing rather than carefully thought out arguments. Being allowed to write spontaneously releases us of the expectation that our writing must be perfect and polished. While most weblogs are personal and informal in their purpose, academics writing in this genre also use a much more informal writing style than they tend to in articles written for publication. Adrian Miles comments on this in his weblog:

What is novel is the tone that I'm adopting. Ordinarily when I write in any text app that is not visibly online (email, html or MOOs) my tone is quite different. Authorial, authoritative, academic, scholarly, teacherly (yeah, right), and various other 'formal' modes of utterance. Blogs have changed that dramatically with a much more informal tone but with some of the hallmarks of print literacy. It resides in the public domain, they are authorial to the extent that they are written and published, and they career

the imprimatur of semi permanence and care that email and other more 'oral' forms of electronic literacy don't quite get to.<sup>44</sup>

In our blogs, we allow ourselves to write half-thought, naked ideas and show them to others rather than saving them for fully fleshed out carefully thought through papers. Most ideas a researcher has never make it to a formal article or book; they are forgotten or cast aside because they don't fit the whole. Weblogs elucidate the constant flow of thought and the ever-changing nature of research.

Blogs are chronologically ordered, rather than ordered according to the logic of an argument or the persuasive patterns of rhetoric. Their order is determined by the time of thinking. In contrast to the logical and topical organisation usual in academic writing and note-taking, blogs are chronologically ordered. Writing in a medium – or perhaps better, an element – which encourages a different way of structuring thought can enable us to see differently. Roland Barthes is a writer who deliberately attempted to escape the tyranny of logical argumentation by arranging his writing alphabetically, sectioning his book into segments arranged by the order of their titles.

The alphabetical order erases everything, banishes every origin. Perhaps in places, certain fragments seem to follow one another by some affinity, but the important thing is that these little networks not be connected, that they not slide into a single enormous network which would be the structure of the book, its meaning. It is in order to halt, to deflect, to divide this descent of discourse toward a destiny of the subject, that at certain moments the alphabet calls you to order (to disorder) and says: Cut! Resume the story in another way.<sup>45</sup>

The chronological order of weblogs is from one perspective less random than the alphabetical order Barthes used. Posts to a weblog are published in the order they were written. Thought follows thought and one idea tends to trigger another, though not necessarily in a causal chain. On the other hand, it can be argued that the order of weblogs is more random than Barthes' alphabetically ordered books. Alphabetisation is a structure edited and worked through and the author organises and names each fragment to create a whole, finished work to be published all at once. Weblogs are published bit by bit; they are always in progress, always becoming.

Unedited, spontaneous, scrolling away so the most recent thoughts are always at the top of the page and the older ideas are harder to get to,

blogs encourage a feeling of time which is very different to that felt in traditional academic writing. Usually, notes written on paper accrete in piles. We group them by topic rather than by when they were written. Articles are drafted, revised, rewritten, edited, proofread, finalised and the notes forgotten, made irrelevant by the more polished product. Blogs are a way to trace the flight of thought rather than the chain of thought.

The tangible work of research in the humanities is reading, thinking and writing. In blogs these collapse into one movement. Blogs assume linking and reading and are the written trace of these activities. A blog is a trail, a visible trace of the process of research. Writing a blog presupposes that you read – and all the blogs we've seen refer to other blogs. When we read on the web, our reading is affected by the technology we use to access the text: computer hardware, operating system, browser. Imagine the frustration of reading a piece written as a hyper-text on a computer printout with no chance to follow links.

To summarise: blogging encourages spontaneous, timely and concise expression of thoughts. The genre has in it an expectation of linking, so posts will often comment on other writing and be linked to it.

## Archiving and analysing

Weblogs are used for recording thoughts, for sharing thoughts, for participating in discussions, and also for analysing thoughts. Rebecca Blood, whose article on the history of blogging has received much acclaim in the blogging community, expresses this in these words:

Shortly after I began producing *Rebecca's Pocket* I noticed two side effects I had not expected. First, I discovered my own interests. I thought I knew what I was interested in, but after linking stories for a few months I could see that I was much more interested in science, archeology, and issues of injustice than I had realized. More importantly, I began to value more highly my own point of view. In composing my link text every day I carefully considered my own opinions and ideas, and I began to feel that my perspective was unique and important.<sup>46</sup>

This experience is echoed by many bloggers. From a junior scholar's point of view, blogging can be an excellent method for developing and sustaining a confident and clear voice of one's own and the ability to formulate and stand by opinions. While private journals may fill with notes, they need not be as clearly formulated as a post in a weblog,

which is intended to be read by others, and it is easy to neglect old notes scribbled in the margin of a book or on a notepad. Writing in a weblog one is forced to confront one's own writing and opinions and to see them reflected in the words of others. The discussions are much more open and also more permanent than discussions in a seminar room or at a conference. A blog is a permanent archive (as long as the writer preserves the archives and the server remains online) and it is searchable. What you write in your blog can be quoted and discussed in any forum.

When we write in a blog thoughts don't disappear. They stay. A thought we might otherwise not care to record or mention can be what triggers new work. An example is this passage from *thinking with my fingers*:

I also have selfish reasons for blogging. I think better when I write. Sometimes, I need to get rid of thoughts, and then I write them down so that I can go on. When I was 16 I wrote down the names of the boys I was in love with. If there was one I happened to hate I would burn the note afterwards, and feel like I had some kind of closure. Now, when I am in love with a thought, I can write it down. That lets me examine it when it doesn't expect me to look at it. I can sneak up on it at a time when my head is busy with something else, and I can surprise it in a different context. This will let me see my newfound love, the virgin idea, in a different light, and I can see its flaws and weaknesses, as well as its beauty. And I can move on, let the ones which are not worthy of being taken home live on somewhere outside my head.<sup>47</sup>

This post, a scrap of memory from the seventies combined with the experience of writing the blog itself, stayed with Jill, the other author of this paper, for long enough to resonate and set new thoughts into flight, ultimately leading to this paper. Today it's possible to go back into the archive and find that scrap which otherwise most likely would not have been written down and certainly not published.

## Subjective and concrete

Because weblog posts are usually written in relation to another text or to an experience, they tend to be concrete in nature. Sometime the concrete beginning leads to an abstraction or to a theoretical thought. Abstract and objective thought constitute knowledge in the paradigm of literature cultures; this stands in contrast to what is perceived as knowledge in an oral culture. In a discussion of Walter Ong's work on orality and literacy, Michael Heim writes that

[R]ealities in oral cultures are preserved by metrical language with repeatable rhythmic formulas. Since cognitive form requires patterned, rhythmic speech, what is knowable in those cultures is what falls neatly into the commonplaces and formulas. What in oral cultures cannot be fitted into the topics or stable formulas much be disregarded as arbitrary, absurd, or at least of lesser significance.<sup>48</sup>

How does this relate to blogs? Blogs could be seen to have certain, often-returned-to *topoi*: the remembering of past experiences and relating them to some gained insight, the recognition and marking of respect when a blogger links to someone else who's said something that the writer agrees with or has experienced or has tried to express, the linkslutting,<sup>49</sup> the memes, the meta-reflection about the nature of blogging, linking and popularity, the obsession with recognition and people linking to me, the musings about why I write or why I have decided not to write. These are in a sense the formulae of blogs. The speech itself is not patterned and rhythmic, though it does generally have an informal tone that could perhaps be differentiated from the styles common in journalism, academia, technical writing or fiction. The *topoi* are recurrent motifs of blogs though.

In addition to the words, the visual appearance of weblogs is important. There are standard templates that are used, unaltered, by many bloggers. Others adjust these layouts or create their own from scratch. Even the most individual layouts are made up of elements chosen from the same sack. The page is almost always divided into two or three columns, where the narrower left column includes a description of the weblog, links to previous months' archived posts, links to other blogs that the blogger reads. Sometimes some of these points are in the right hand column instead; sometimes the columns are reversed. Posts are usually set apart in some way: they may be time stamped, dated, signed («posted by NN»), titled or simply separated by a line or blank space. Many weblogs participate in web rings and display colourful banners or buttons which both declare their allegiance and allow the reader to click through to another, presumably somehow similar, weblog. Some weblogs have no or very few images while others rely on rich eye candy. The manga-inspired design of many sites is an example of how not only ideas (memes) but also images and design elements spread fast through the network of weblogs.

Traditional academic essays also follow certain topics and formula, as mentioned above. The *topoi* of weblogs, visual, verbal and conceptual, do appear to be more virulently repetitive. It would be worth investigating

whether the *memes* so often referred to among bloggers are accepted and spread precisely because they do fit neatly into the topoi – the commonplaces and formulae – of weblogs. The idea that some kinds of knowledge are discarded as absurd because they do not fit into the stable formulas of a genre could be applied to both weblogs and to the scholarly article or book. This is an important reason for writing in different ways, with different tools and in different genres, so we can appreciate many different kinds of knowledge.

## The social network of blogging

Weblogs are written in relation to other texts. As discussed above, the primacy of the link affects the style of writing; it affects the form or the genre. It is often stated that it is hard to define a weblog,<sup>50</sup> yet as we have shown, there are simple formal qualities common to all the sites that call themselves weblogs. Evan William's succinct 'Frequency, Brevity, and Personality' provides a good summary of these formal traits. Within the blogging community, there is less agreement about what a *good* weblog is like. In such a group of determined and vocal individuals, where the number of weblogs is far too great<sup>51</sup> for any one reader to have sampled all or even most of the blogs in existence, quality is not a satisfactory or practical measure. Popularity, on the other hand, is easily measurable if you interpret popularity as the number of other weblogs linking to a particular blog. Numbers of readers are rarely mentioned, and these statistics are in any case untrustworthy and not publicly verifiable. Links to a site can be found by anyone, by using a search engines or by looking at a site like Blogdex, which indexes links between weblogs.

Weblogs tend to come together in clusters as they link to each other. A reader of your site may link to you; you see the link in your referral stats and start reading their blog. You find it interesting, and link back to it. The readers of your blog, some of who keep their own blogs, start reading the other blog, and some of them also link to it. And so it continues. Our weblogs belong to such a loose cluster, as before mentioned, 'the Scandinavian flavoured cluster'<sup>52</sup>. In part the cluster has grown forth as described here, through gradual linking. It has also developed through personal and professional contacts; many of us knew each other from conferences before starting to write weblogs. In addition, we work within adjacent fields: game studies, hypertext, online narratives and so on.

In the wider blogging community the most popular, well-established and famous cluster is known as the 'A-list'. The A-list is a cluster of early adaptors to weblog technology, some of them creators of popular software, such as Evan Williams, co-creator of *Blogger*, or people who are part of the same (offline) social network as the creators. These extremely popular blogs are not necessarily distinguished through style, but through persistence: writing a fairly interesting weblog over time increases the chance of being read, linked to and 'blogged' by others. Because the A-list is linked to fame through persistence and in some cases early presentation, rather than quality, it is static and unchangeable.

Cameron Marlow, the developer of Blogdex, is currently working on a PhD project at the MIT Media Lab where he is using data on linking structures between blogs to analyse what he refers to as the social networks between blogs and the relation between this network and the ways in which *memes* spread between blogs. He has developed the Blogdex indexing system as part of this research. The Social Network Explorer uses information from Blogdex's database to show the networks between blogs. While references in academic papers (which are in many ways close to hypertextual links) are rarely thought of as markers of friendship, Marlow's Social Network Explorer uses the term 'friends' for the persons writing the weblogs with the closest connections through linking - the most frequent links between you and it.

To be told by a program that you are the friend of a person you have never met, can be constructed as intrusive - but knowing that the members of the A-list, the early users of weblog software, used the web not to reach a large audience but to reach each other; to talk of two people with several links back and forth between their sites as 'friends' becomes logical and perhaps even precise. It also demonstrates the highly social nature of weblogging.

In the semi-social structure of weblogs, linking is a measure of popularity, which again is generally interpreted as a measure of quality. The poetics of weblogs is not present in these measures of quality, and might seem to be non-existent. But the poetics and aesthetics of the form is a central topic of weblogs themselves: an endless meta-discussion in between the other topics of choice, a common denominator and source of conversations.

## Conclusions

This entire article might be dismissed as an elaborate excuse for procrastinating while we should be finishing our PhDs. Maintaining a weblog while we complain about the stress of writing a dissertation seems self-contradictory at first and second glance. Both of us however experienced that writing the thesis became easier and the writing more focused after we started blogging. This discord between commonly accepted ways of studying for and writing a thesis and our own experiences was the motivation for this discussion.

Our positive experiences with blogs may be related to the fact that we both do online research. Rather than distancing ourselves and permitting an escape from the object of research, the blog lives within the same frame as the computer games and the electronic narratives we study, keeping us close to the technology, the relevant formal as well as informal discourse and the objects themselves.

The weblog as an equalising power on the net and an equaliser between scholars and non-scholars is another matter all together. While services like Blogger in principle make it possible for everybody to start their own blog, participate in discussions and be part of the blogging community, the different clusters grow slowly, expand conservatively and put great value in exclusivity expressed through links. To be able to prove this claim, we would need to expand the scope of our study beyond our own cluster. This is the curse of studying cutting-edge technology – to study it you have to be an innovator or early user, and as such your experiences and your knowledge cannot be immediately generalised.

All we can do is to speak for ourselves and present our experiences. We open our claims to scrutiny, point to sources that might assist or deny our claims and offer this article to our peers, in the best tradition of academia.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Giles Turnbull. 'The State of the Blog.' Interview with Even Williams, *Writing the Web*. 28 February 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Bernstein, *markbernstein.org*, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Bernstein, *Mark Bernstein*, 1 September 2001:

Someone should take a good look at clustering phenomena in Web logs. For example, consider the interesting and active cluster of media-theory Scandinavian-flavored weblogs from Sjursen, Walker, Klastруп, Frasca, Miles, and others. The Web design community has recently been sharply critical of co-citation practices, which some regard as merely a way for elites to reinforce their influence and which has led to the suspension of dreamless.org and K10K pending the arrival of cooler heads. I suspect, though, that these clusters are more interesting, and less strictly political, than they may seem at first —

perhaps a visible manifestation of discipline-formation in process.

<sup>4</sup> Anders Fagerjord, *Surftrail*, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Lisbeth Klastруп, *Klastрупs Cataclysms*.

<sup>6</sup> Anja Rau, *Flickwerk*.

<sup>7</sup> Rebecca Blood, 'Weblogs: a history and perspective,' *Rebecca's Pocket*, 7/9/2000

<sup>8</sup> Reason P. & Bradbury, H. 2001. 'Introduction: inquiry and participation in search of a world worthy of human aspiration'. *Handbook of Action Research*. London: Sage.

<sup>9</sup> Reason, I.

<sup>10</sup> Biz Stone is planning a book on weblogs and has started writing a blog about the process: <http://www.bizstone.com/book/>, in Fortune.com Carlyle Adler writes about professional weblogs, *Weblogs by pros are founts of insight*. In February 2002 John C. Dvorak in PC Magazine writes about blogs as a recent change to online writing in his article *The Blog Phenomenon*, but he does not consider professional blogs.

<sup>11</sup> Weblogs are by definition always works in progress. The form defies finality. What is posted today may be withdrawn tomorrow.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Merholz's *Peterme* and Mark Bernstein's *Mark Bernstein* are excellent examples of professional rather than university-based research blogs.

<sup>13</sup> Heim, M. 1999. *The Electric Word*. New Haven: Yale UP. 32.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Merholz, *Peterme*, 28 May 1999.

<sup>15</sup> *Blogdex* has a longer list of different weblogging tools, both servers and clients: <http://blogdex.media.mit.edu/info.asp>. Cited 12 February 2002.

<sup>16</sup> It is difficult to discuss weblogs without discussing the tools used to write them. Different software allows different processes, and the differences between software products can be subtle, but always control their users.

<sup>17</sup> Tinderbox was developed by Eastgate Systems and released in 2002. More information on this product can be found at <http://eastgate.com>

<sup>18</sup> Jill Walker, *jill/txt*, 20 November 2001.

<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, it is possible that the raw nature of weblog writing is part of the reason for it's popularity. The immediacy, the continuity, the apparent honesty and the unedited quality of weblogs are traits comparable to important elements in reality TV shows.

<sup>20</sup> Habermas, J. 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Polity Press:

<sup>21</sup> Habermas (1989: 33).

<sup>22</sup> Habermas (1989: 23, original italics).

<sup>23</sup> Sennet, R. 1977. *The Fall of Public Man*. New York: Knopff.

<sup>24</sup> Habermas (1989: 36).

<sup>25</sup> Galtung, G. & Holmboe Ruge, M. (1965) *The Structure of Foreign News*. *Journal of Peace Research* Bd. 2). 65 – 91.

<sup>26</sup> David Chandler, 'Personal home pages and the construction of identities on the web', 1998.

<sup>27</sup> In the weeks after September 11 already existing weblogs such as Adnan Arif's *adnan.org*, Rebecca Blood's *Rebecca's Pocket* and many others became almost exclusively devoted to discussing the attacks and the war. Other we-

blogs were started specifically to discuss the events, see for instance Jeff Jarvis's *Warlog* or Bjørn Stærk's *The World after WTC*. Blogger.com's archives for September 2001 contain links to newspaper coverage of webloggers writing about the attacks, and to individual weblogs.

<sup>28</sup> Evan Williams posted this information to the front page of *Blogger.com*, 12 September 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Ottosen, R. 1991. *The Gulf War with the Media as Hostage*. Oslo : International Peace Research Institute.

<sup>30</sup> Tom Matrullo, 'Loci amoeni', *Commonplaces*, 23 January 2002.

<sup>31</sup> The term *meme*, meaning a unit of cultural information that is transmitted from one mind to another, was coined by Richard Dawkins as a cultural equivalent to the gene in his book *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford UP 1989). The term is heavily used among bloggers, giving a name to some blogs such as memepool.com and mememachine.net.

<sup>32</sup> Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction, a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge. 39.

<sup>33</sup> Bourdieu, P. & Jean-Claude Passeron, J.-C. 1997/1990. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage. 31.

<sup>34</sup> According to Bourdieu, the system will embrace rebellion quicker than you can produce new ways to undermine it. This paper can be seen as such an embrace: incorporating back into the sphere of scholarship the tool which lets us publish independently of it.

<sup>35</sup> Jenkins, H. 2002, 'Blog this: digital renaissance', *Technology Review* (Cambridge MA: MIT). March. The first part of the initial sentence was removed from the online version of the article a few days after we cited it.

<sup>36</sup> Dave Winer, *Scripting News*, 15 February 2002.

<sup>37</sup> Pop!Tech 2001. *Online, Everywhere, All the Time. How Technology will Change our Lives*. The conference web site has a link to weblogs that were written during the conference containing notes from the keynotes and other observations from the conference. Readers could enter their comments in a discussion feature.

<sup>38</sup> Jenkins, op.cit..

<sup>39</sup> Elin Sjørnsen, *BloggerdyDoc*, 28 February 2002.

<sup>40</sup> See for instance Birkerts, S. 1996. *The Gutenberg Elegies*. London: Faber & Faber. 27.

<sup>41</sup> Vannevar Bush, 'As we may think'.

<sup>42</sup> David Weinberger refers to these polylogues as *blogyarns* in contrast to the commonly used *blogthreads*, because several blogs participate; each blog becomes a thread in the spun yarn. *JOHO the Blog*, 15 February 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Birkerts, op.cit. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Adrian Miles, *vlog*, 18 September 2001.

<sup>45</sup> Barthes, R. 1989. *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*. Ithaca, NY: Noonday Press. 148.

<sup>46</sup> Rebecca Blood, 'Weblogs: a history and perspective.' *Rebecca's Pocket*. 7/9/2000. Blood also has a book on weblogs forthcoming from Perseus Publishing in June 2002.

<sup>47</sup> Torill Mortensen, *Thinking With My Fingers*, 20 June 2001.

<sup>48</sup> Heim, op.cit. 61.

<sup>49</sup> Linkslutting is a term used for trying to get people to link to your blog in return for your linking to them, where the actual link (which is hoped to increase traffic to the site; i.e. the number of readers) is more important than any content.

<sup>50</sup> See for instance *The Daily Dose*, 31 August 2001. At:

<http://www.thedailydose.net/dose310801p4.htm>

<sup>51</sup> Cameron Marlow estimates the total number of weblogs to be close to 400000. There are nearly 15000 indexed by Blogdex at the time of writing. (post to the Blogdex weblog 14 January 2002. At:

<http://blogdex.media.mit.edu/news/archives/00000071.asp>

<sup>52</sup> See note 3.