

PERSONAL STORIES GO WORLDWIDE: THE RITUAL OF
STORYTELLING THROUGH WEBLOGS

Janet L. Johnson, B.A.

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2004

APPROVED:

Jacqueline Lambiase, Major Professor
Susan Zavoina, Committee Member and
Chair of the Department of
Journalism

Sheri Broyles, Committee Member
Mitchell Land, Director of the Frank W.
Mayborn Institute of Journalism

Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B.
Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

Johnson, Janet L. Personal stories go worldwide: the ritual of storytelling through Weblogs. Master of Arts (Journalism), August 2004, 58 pp., 4 tables, reference list, 26 titles.

The once private traditional written diary is shifting to an electronic storytelling tradition. Online diaries or Weblogs are a growing phenomenon that scholars have ignored until recently. This qualitative project uses narrative and rhetorical analysis to focus on storytelling themes in Weblogs, rituals in storytelling and the similarities and differences from traditional written diaries. In this study, 30 Weblogs were chosen from three Web domains: livejournal.com, blogger.com and diarest.net. The findings show that Weblogs are filled with rich storytelling that emulates many qualities of traditional diaries. In general, Weblogs authors are communicating stories online to an interactive mass audience and forming new rituals in a new electronic forum.

Copyright 2004

by

Janet L. Johnson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In this thesis I examined how the Internet is providing a portal for instantaneous publication and that this new electronic storytelling device is allowing people to electronically self-publish their version of their reality to a mass audience. I wish to extend my sincerest thanks to Dr. Jacqueline Lambiase for her patience, comments, guidance and encouragement to explore Weblogs as a new ritual in storytelling.

Thanks to my parents for their support and encouragement to pursue my dreams. Lastly, I would like to thank my sister and friends, whose support and understanding throughout this process kept me motivated to achieve my goal.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	v
INTRODUCTION	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	4
Communication Ritual Theory	
History of Journals	
Weblog vs. Traditional Written Diaries	
Debates	
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	16
METHODOLOGY	17
RESULTS	21
DISCUSSION	42
Future Research	
Conclusion	
REFERENCE LIST	52

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Communication ritual theory	5
2. Weblog URLs	15
3. Most common Weblog narrative themes	19
4. Examples of narrative themes.....	22

INTRODUCTION

Communication via the computer over the last 15 years has produced new texts for social researchers to study. One current trend that has not undergone much empirical study is the increasing number of online diaries, or Weblogs, that have been produced in the last few years. A Weblog is defined as “a frequently updated Webpage with dated entries, new ones placed on top” (Blood, 2002, p. ix). A Weblog is asynchronous, non-commercial and allows users to post personal messages to a Web site for an audience. According to Perseus Development Corporation in a survey of Weblog users, about 4.1 million Weblogs existed online on eight Weblog domain sites. By the end of 2004, the company estimated that number would increase more than 250% to 10.3 million online Weblogs. In fact, a Google™ search in early 2004 on the term *Weblog* produced 10.9 million results.

With the millions of Weblogs being produced, research is needed to discover how these forums are similar to other online communication and how these forums compare with other textual expressions of human interaction. Much scholarship has investigated *how* people communicate online (Gurak, 1996; Herring, 2004, 2003), but scholars have spent less time on *what* people are communicating. This paper will examine storytelling themes in Weblogs.

Today, Weblogs (also known as blogs) are transforming once private interior worlds into open books for public viewing. These modern-day diarists, or bloggers, believe their lives are important and are “compelled to share with whomever is reading” (Blood, 2002, p.13). Before the Internet, many people simply did not have a forum to share living narratives with a mass audience (McNeill, 2003). A Weblog allows a person to bypass the red tape of publishing by

means of traditional print media. Online diaries, McNeill (2003) said, “can be read as assertions of identity and arguments for the importance of an individual’s life” (p. 26).

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 126 million Americans use the Internet and 44% percent of online Americans have contributed content to the Internet. A February 2004 preliminary study by Pew indicated up to 7% of content creators wrote a Weblog and 46% of online Americans said they had visited a stranger’s Weblog. Women are more likely to create Weblogs than men. According to Perseus, women accounted for 56% of Weblogs compared to 44% created by men. In addition, Perseus found that the Weblogs surveyed were not periodically updated. About 66% of Weblog entries were at least two months old.

The Internet did not begin as the social network it has become today. In the late 1960s, the U.S. Department of Defense created an early version of the Internet. The Internet’s sole purpose was to link researchers worldwide to collaborate and share information (Rosenberg, 1997). During the mid-1990s, the Internet grew to include major companies, personal homepages, and other ubiquitous sites. Weblogs have existed since 1997, and people began to surf the Internet, logging the sites they visited on their own personal Web sites.

To help guide this study, Weblogs will be compared to traditional written diaries. Although an in-depth study of all similarities and differences between Weblogs and traditional diaries is beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth mentioning a background of the traditional diary (Autrey, 1991; Mallon, 1984; McNeill, 2003). Also, one must consider the difference between each type of written forum: Weblogs are a mass medium as well as interpersonal communication because of the potential of two-way communication between the author and the reader and the mass audience that reads the Weblog. A traditional diary was meant to be private. Diary writing has evolved from pencil and paper to a computer.

This project seeks to discover the ways that people are using Weblogs to express themselves, and it will use narrative theory and rhetorical analysis to gain insight into these electronic diaries. In addition, this study will focus on themes of Weblogs, on storytelling strategies by Weblog writers, on communication rituals of these digital logs through interactivity and Weblog communities, and on the similarities and differences between traditional diaries and Weblogs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication Ritual Theory

Communication theorists such as Schramm (1954) and Laswell (1948) usually describe the process of communication in terms of transportation. The message travels from a sender to receiver by way of a channel (e.g., telegraph, telephone, and television) and is a linear model. The traditional transmission models of communication explain how messages travel to their destinations, but they do not show why or what people communicate. Carey (1989) noted that these traditional models of communication show only the process of communicating, but he asserts that it is also important to look beyond the process and to see communication as a ritual. No matter what channel a person uses, a person communicates with shared beliefs, seeking out like-minded people.

During a birthday party celebration, people gather and sing *Happy Birthday*. This is an example of Carey's view of communication as a ritual (1989). According to *Merriam Webster's Dictionary* the root word *com* derives from Middle English, Old French, and Latin meaning "with, together and jointly." Words that use the root word *com* include communication, commonness and community, and are words that explain the heart of the communication ritual theory. Carey (1989) noted the rituals are the sacred ceremonies that bind people together as a community and develop into a society as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Communication Ritual Theory

Factor	Community –Cultural- Ritual	Applied to Weblogs
Level of analysis	Social	Sharing personal stories and links within a Web community
Mode of interaction	Ritual	People share and retell stories daily
Domain	Temporal	Time and date stamps on each Weblog posting, most recent entry posted first
Typical Results	Cultural goods and traditions	Digital storytelling

Note: Author’s version of Lenert’s (1998) adaptation of Carey’s (1989) theory on communication ritual.

Table 1 explains the link between Carey’s (1989) ritual theory and the theory’s application to Weblogs. The communication ritual model places the most importance on community and shows that the communication process is more socially complex than transmitting messages linearly (Carey, 1989; Lenert, 1998). Table 1 explains Lenert’s (1998) adaptation of Carey’s (1989) ritual communication theory. Lenert originally compared the transmission model to the communication ritual theory. For example, Lenert said the communication ritual theory—or what he called the community-cultural-ritual theory—is social, ritual, temporal and results in traditions. Applying these same principles to Weblogs allows one to examine Weblogs as separate communities, temporal and resulting in digital storytelling traditions. Weblogs share in storytelling rituals. Web domains such as livejournal.com and blogger.com specialize in creating a community atmosphere for their Weblogs. Weblogs also

hold stories and, without personal storytelling, no logical view of the self can be portrayed without communicating these personal rituals (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

People talk about themselves and others in story form and “people live their lives by telling stories” (Heath & Bryant, 2000, p. 220). Since Weblogs are often part of a Web domain used by bloggers who often link to other bloggers, it is safe to conclude these domains are communities as Table 1 suggests and the ritual of forming communities is changing rapidly with technology.

Communicating Online

The Internet has changed the realm of mass communication. Television and radio usually have audiences that are large, anonymous and heterogeneous (Heath & Bryant, 2000). Now the Internet allows audience members to have much more user power (2000). Audience members are able to leave feedback and become more interactive because the Internet promotes transactional mediated-communication that results in the interpersonal communication among Internet users (2000). Dicken-Garcia (1998) noted the Internet is a haven for informal, interpersonal conversation. Interacting with others online fulfills “an important or social psychological function” (Joinson, 2003, p. 143).

Weblogs may also be classified as computer-mediated communication (CMC). CMC is “communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers” (Herring, 1996, p.1). CMC is a lean medium because the information one receives is visual and one has no direct contact with another human being other than text on a computer screen (Herring, 2001). Face-to-face communication is then a rich medium, because one can view body language, tone of voice and other visual and auditory cues.

CMC helps people to compose their self-images, hone their messages and allows people to communicate on the Internet worldwide at any time. People also have access to information faster and are able to communicate instantaneously worldwide with anyone that has Internet access (Herring, 2001) and may respond to messages at their convenience. However, it should be noted that slow downloading times, connection problems and error pages still plague the Internet's communication process (Shields, 2000).

The Internet is sometimes not dependable for communicating an effective message. CMC, when integrated by an extensive amount of diverse users, is capable of becoming "socially and politically powerful" (Gurak, 1996, p. 266). When Lotus MarketPlace cancelled a product due to privacy issues with the software, people started posting messages about how to contact Lotus and their opinions about the privacy issue (Gurak, 1996). Lotus became frustrated because responding to each individual message was not feasible.

Sometimes CMC messages become a positive influence. In 2001, Eliza Tanner studied Chilean Internet conversations about the arrest of ex-dictator Augusto Pinochet. Chileans participated in an online debate in an online public space. Four issues were discussed in the cyberspace forum that hosted the debate: access, freedom of communication, structure of deliberation and the public use of reason (Tanner, 2001, p. 387). The online debate reflected the unity that Chileans felt towards their country and created a community that helped people of a similar background voice their diverse opinions.

The uses and gratifications' theory may explain why people are using the Internet not only for political activism, but also for personal narratives. The theory explains that using a medium is not a random act, but deciphers why people use the medium and the satisfaction one receives. By using the Internet, people can share their ideas, goals, values and opinions online

and reach a large audience (Bagdikian, 2000). Thomas E. Ruggiero (2000) argued that the Internet would eventually result in forming little communities. Recall that Table 1 showed the social aspect to the communication ritual theory. People are gratified when using the Internet to share opinions with others who either agree or disagree about the same subject without revealing their identity.

History of Journals

The word diary in Western culture dates back to the late 1500s. The word journal is synonymous with travel (Gannett, 1992) because the first explorers documented trips taken to the unknown. The word journal dates back to the Old French *papeir journal*, which means “daybook.” Diary originated from the Latin word *diurnal*, which means “belonging to the day.” The words diurnal and journal can both be found in 14th century religious books that logged church activities as well as officials, priests and explorers’ travel journals.

The earliest diaries date back to Japan in 56 A.D. (Lowenstein, 1987). Japanese called this diary a pillow book because they kept the book in the bedroom. A pillow book was a very private account of one’s life.

Ancient Greeks then developed a practical journal called the commonplace book. Ancient Greeks used commonplace books for writing speeches and quotes that many of their writers would memorize and draw upon for future reference (Autrey, 1991). The Greeks also kept dream diaries.

Later, diaries evolved into more confessional writings (Autrey, 1991). The most familiar type of diary still used today was born during the Renaissance and Reformation periods and flourished during the 18th and 19th centuries (Gannett, 1992). During this time, the diary became a traditional habit for most men and women to chronicle their life stories.

Thomas Mallon (1984) noted seven types of diaries: the chroniclers, travelers, pilgrims, creators, apologists, confessors, and prisoners. Mallon (1984) said of the diaries he studied:

Some are chroniclers of the everyday. Others have kept their books only in special times—over the course of a trip, or during a crisis. Some have used them to record journeys of the soul, plan the art of the future, confess the sins of the flesh, and lecture the world from beyond the grave. And some of them, prisoners and invalids have used them not so much to record lives as create them, their diaries being the only world in which they could fully live (p. xvii).

Autrey (1991) noted that Mallon (1984) disregarded one type of diary—the pedagogical journal. Autrey asserts Mallon’s “bias lies in favor of the journal as literary artifact rather than as a means of personal development and learning” (p. 81). Autrey believed educators should teach students more about commonplace notebooks to use in their lives rather than diaries that Mallon (1984) noted as “literary artifacts.”

Mallon (1984) and Fothergill (1974), diary historians, both believe the most famous chronicler of history is Samuel Pepys. Pepys was an official for the Royal Navy in London and his diary served as a historical record of 17th century London. January 1, 1660, was the first entry in Pepys’ diary, which recorded historical events such as the Great Plague of 1665. Mallon (1984) said Pepys did not write daily and entries sometimes lapsed as long as 12 days apart. He also used hieroglyphics and wrote in shorthand. Pepys’ diary is so renowned that a Web site (<http://www.pepysdiary.com/>) started converting Pepys’ diary into a Weblog that links Pepys’ 17th century journal to the modern world of diaries.

While chroniclers such as Pepys recorded history, the Quakers in the 17th century used diaries as their “journal of conscience” (Fothergill, 1974; Johnson, 2001). Spiritual diaries from new religious groups such as the Quakers and Puritans recorded one’s personal journey with God (Lowenstein, 1987; Mallon, 1984) and these diaries became spiritual confessions. The 1656 published diary of John Beadle, *The Journal or Diary of a Thankful Christian*, examined the

importance of examining a person's spiritual growth (Fothergill, 1974). Beadle's diary showed the benefits of developing a relationship with God. Both the Puritan and Quaker journal/diaries ignored writing about the outside world and concentrated only on individual spiritual growth. Today, a person may write his/her innermost thoughts without judgment (Johnson, 2001).

The line is thin when discussing novelists, artists and other creators who use diaries and journals not only for private thoughts, but also for their professions. For example, Mallon (1984) suggested that Virginia Woolf's private notes in her diary about her novel *To the Lighthouse* helped guide her thoughts and worries about her new creation. She often wondered what critics might think and would note the progress of the plot.

Diaries such as Confederate women's Civil War diaries helped tell the story of a war, but Harrison (2003) said that women used "personal writing to rehearse and construct an effective ethos for turbulent times" (p. 243). Even though the Confederate-era diaries were often written using informal persuasive prose, the diaries seemed as if they were intended for public viewing (Harrison, 2003). The women of the Civil War created a self-rhetoric (Harrison, 2003) since their diaries were not intended for an external audience. In writing their diaries, these Confederate-era women convinced themselves through their writing that it was acceptable to take up non-traditional gender roles. The women explained and helped shape their own reality (Harrison, 2003) as a way to understand their new roles in society.

Although many people keep their daily diary in a neat notebook or leather-bound book, the most famous diarists used unconventional means to jot down their thoughts. Thoreau for example used birch bark as paper and pencils that he made himself (2001). Others might find old scraps of paper, wire-bound notebooks or keep their thoughts in the squares of calendars (Johnson, 2001). A diary has no boundaries and "a diary can change its color to suit the mood of

its keeper. It can be whatever the diarist wants it to be” (Taylor, 2000, p. xviii). Even Mallon (1984) concluded that the diary has no formulas or standards. Fothergill (1974) compared diaries to the best literature because diaries “extend our realization of what being alive is like” (p. 10). Today, diaries/journals are transitioning into a new technological realm where strangers are able to lurk and learn about other people’s thoughts and lives with permission. Diaries are becoming a tradition again without pen and paper, but with a computer. The tradition is shifting.

Weblog vs. Traditional Written Diaries

Technology might propel more diarists to write everyday, but the differences between the two forms are quickly becoming noticeable. Keeping a traditional journal is a more time consuming, insular process than quickly typing thoughts in a Weblog. Both diaries and Weblogs are flexible and include a time and date stamp that is included with a written entry, with the most recent on top. Weblog authors are also able to include embedded hypertext links that help readers navigate through the Web. Both traditional diaries and Weblogs contain unique writing styles. Blogs and old-style diaries both can have a free form of expression, but blogs have a more rigid format in terms of software programs and occasional computer languages one must learn. Most blog Web sites make it easy to start a blog without any programming knowledge or hypertext markup language.

Blog content is still as enticing as old-style diaries. Bloggers often link their diaries to historical, journalistic and entertaining text to help explain their thoughts. These links add to the reader’s experience. Journals require time and thought where a Weblog is a place a person may return to add or edit his/her thoughts (McNeill, 2003). Weblogs also are a way to share a writer’s experience by following the links they provide in their personal narratives (McNeill, 2003). Links add to a reader’s experience because it makes the reader feel a part of the narrative.

The writer remains anonymous to the reader, and becomes more like a character in a narrative. In addition, the line between fiction and reality starts to cloud the reader's mind (McNeill, 2003).

Technology also encourages a response from readers, unlike traditional diaries (Kitzman, 2003). One main difference between a traditional diary and a Weblog is privacy. An online Weblog is usually available to the public:

Before electronic media, the place of the diary was a private place, a place of momentary seclusion and self-reflection. Though there may have been an implied audience, as the phrase "dear diary" suggests, this is not the same thing as an actual audience (Kitzman, 2003, p. 56).

The Weblog author expects the audience to read online diaries (2003). Readers may participate by responding by email or by posting a message directly to the blogger's Web site. Kitzman (2003) said the Internet "functions as an empty vessel waiting to be 'filled up' with cultural content" (p. 63). Until then, the existing cultural practices will still take precedent until scholars analyze new media further (Kitzman, 2003).

Narratives in Weblogs are not unlike narratives that one will find in other literary genres. Weblogs have all the necessary ingredients that literary narratives include; they have story, discourse, and telling (Bruner, 1986). Weblog stories still "give meaning to the present and enable us to see that present as part of a set of relationships involving a constituted past and a future" (Bruner, 1986, p. 153). Also, there is no fixed meaning to the past (1986). Just like in Weblogs, the audience will differ and take away its impression of a Web diarist's experience.

Noticing time in diaries is important. Sometimes though, traditional diaries do not follow story form and are just sequential. Traditional diaries, Jennifer Sinor (2002) said, are daily writings that she calls "dailiness." Sinor (2002) said she inherited her great-great-great-aunt Annie Ray's diary. The diary would be of no interest to anyone other than her family members because the diary was written in the late 19th century without any narrative structure. Diaries like

Annie's are just day-to-day accounts that do not tell stories (2002). Dailiness in diaries lack what Sinor compared to the tick-tock of a clock:

We anticipate the tock as soon as we begin a story, as soon as we hear the tick. Plot, by design, is occasioned—there is an event, a problem, a need at the center of the narrative that must get worked through. Plot is the working through (p. 125).

A storytelling diary may consist of a person's trip or a person who chronicles his/her illness (Sinor, 2002). A daily diary like Sinor's (2002) aunt has no true beginning or true ending.

Time is an essential element of diaries and of Weblogs. Laurel Richardson (1990) agreed when she said, "people experience their lives in relationship to time" (p. 124). A diary or a Weblog is one way to show what Richardson (1990) described as people knowing their days are numbered. Weblogs usually provide a date and time the diary entry was written, as noted in Table 1. As a result, Weblog diaries provide a clear chronology of the writer's life.

Traditional diaries have always been designed for the present moment, which is what makes Weblogs the quintessential form of journaling. Usually the author only reads his/her diary. That is why storytelling in diaries may not follow the structure in many other literary genres. Aristotle said that stories are broken into a beginning, middle and end (Kuhn-Osius, 1981). However, a diary may not have those distinct changes that a fictional story provides (Kuhn-Osius, 1981). As Sinor (2002) said, her great-great-great aunt's diary did not read like a story. Sinor's aunt did not realize her future or her past, which is critical in supplying a beginning, middle and end to a story. Kuhn-Osius (1981) said that if these changes do not occur in the story, there really is no story. It is not possible in fictional writing to exclude the beginning, middle and end, but a diary may not have such clear distinctions. In fact, in diaries the future is unclear (Kuhn-Osius, 1981) because one is not looking towards the future, but towards the present day.

Even though Weblogs are new to the Internet, a defined structure to Weblogs already is in place for authors. The most recent entry is on top, a time/date stamp is included and one may include hypertext links. However, hypertext links often interrupt the story and force readers to other Web pages (Shields, 2000). Authors embed hypertext links in Web pages to help the reader navigate the Web.

The reader experiences the author's own experiences, not only through their narratives, but also through their own reality. In assuming a user name on Weblogs, they leave an important first impression on their audience. The user names create distinct identities for the blogger and profoundly shape the way the readers perceive the diarist on the Internet (Joinson, 2003). Using a user name is acceptable because face-to-face communication is not possible in Weblogs. The Internet allows a diarist to "create new identities, and to manage the self we present to others" (p. 124). Joinson said the online author chooses a user name to reach a certain audience with an intended purpose.

Debates

Early research shows that Weblogs are growing in popularity because they offer a public forum for sharing personal views and perspectives on world events. That is why some advocates are calling Weblogs "new journalism." Sometimes the Weblog author cites articles that the typical Web surfer may not find (Blood, 2002). Weblogs also provide different ideas and commentary that "reminds us to question the vested interest of our sources of information and the expertise of individual reporters as they file news stories about subjects they may not fully understand" (Blood, 2002, p. 9). Weblogs are also known as the anti-newspaper (Lasica, 2002) because instead of the "objective point of view one finds in newspapers, Weblogs tend to be impressionistic, telegraphic, raw, honest, individualistic, highly opinionated and passionate,

often striking an emotional chord. If nothing else, people sharing what's in their gut and backing it up with facts or persuasion" (Lasica, 2002, ¶ 4-5). In general, Weblogs serve as a gateway for personal narratives, which is usually one's own personal opinion.

However, not all Weblogs are journalistic endeavors. Many people create Weblogs solely for the purpose of journaling. Perseus Development Corporation found that even though about 80% of Weblogs linked to outside sources, only 9.9% of the links were from credible news sources.

Online journalism in Weblogs presented itself after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, when many people started to write about their personal experiences during the terrorist attacks (Allan, 2002). Each person recounted different experiences to the tragedy through Weblogs. Many managers of Weblogs took personal photographs and stories about September 11 and linked them together to create a whole story (Allan, 2002). Even journalists managed to find news sources to gain insight for their own story (Allan, 2002).

Similarly, during the War in Iraq droves of Americans turned to Weblogs, seeking views and opinions outside the mainstream media. The Pew Internet & American Life Project (2003) reported that 4% of online Americans went to Weblogs to seek out information and opinions. This data showed that blogs have a growing audience but not for news gathering alone.

Early Weblog research may consider Weblogs as journalism, but now all types of genres are emerging. This paper will study 30 randomly selected Weblogs by using narrative and rhetorical analysis. With 10.3 million Weblogs expected online by the end of 2004, the 30 Weblogs selected are only a snapshot to help explain the phenomenon.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Narrative analysis was selected to provide an overview of the narrative topics written in Weblogs. Two criteria are suggested to separate the analysis of narratives (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). The first criterion is to read the narrative at face value. The second criterion is to analyze whether the story is truthful and accurate. Unfortunately, the second criterion is beyond the scope of this paper because the Weblog authors are anonymous and unreachable to verify their stories. In this paper, stories will be accepted as valid because “narratives, even when producing distortion, are part of a world of facts; they are factual as narratives and so should be considered” (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000, p. 71). In this study, the text is analyzed using the basic principles of the above criteria. The research questions directing the analysis of the Weblog sample are the following:

- What storytelling themes emerge in Weblogs?
- How do Weblogs reflect the ritual of storytelling?
- Are Weblogs a communication ritual that instead of isolating the writer, immerses the writer into communion with others since Weblogs are in public spaces?
- Can Weblogs be considered as part of the historical tradition of diary/journal keeping?

METHODOLOGY

Because many Web sites specialize in hosting Weblogs, 30 Weblogs were selected from three top Weblog community Web sites: blogger.com, livejournal.com and diarest.net. The three Web hosting sites were chosen by using a Google™ search to determine the most popular sites. Thirty Weblogs were selected for analysis on December 2, 2003 and December 3, 2003. The author visited these 30 sites weekly until April 30, 2004. Ten were from blogger.com, 10 from livejournal.com and 10 from diarest.net. Two criteria that helped guide the selection process were: (a) Weblogs had to be written in English and (b) Weblogs had to be updated at least once a month to be considered active.

The 10 Weblogs selected from livejournal.com were chosen by clicking the random button located on livejournal.com's home page. Blogger.com's 10 Weblogs were selected from blogger.com's most recently updated blog postings. Finally, diarest.net's 10 Weblogs were chosen from their top 10 list of the highest traffic Weblogs. Below in Table 2 are the 30 blog Web addresses.

Table 2: Weblog URLs

Blogger.com	Livejournal.com	Diarest.net
http://-random-thoughts.blogspot.com/	http://www.xs4all.nl/~rienz/asylum/index.html	http://www.livejournal.com/users/cinnamonlip/
http://42short.blogspot.com/	http://cumwhore.blogspot.com/	http://www.livejournal.com/users/celtic_raven/
http://flowingriver.blogspot.com/	http://perceptionss.diaryland.com/	http://www.livejournal.com/users/princessodyssey/
http://www.sperare.com/spam_poetry/blogger.html	http://thisdarkgirl.diaryland.com/	http://www.livejournal.com/users/notagain/
http://www.pnak.com/index.html	http://sarahsundae.diaryland.com/	http://www.livejournal.com/users/sarahstravels/
http://www.queenofindiana.com/	http://www.frenzee.net/bloggie/	http://www.livejournal.com/users/sweet_ave/
http://walkingixus.blogspot.com/	http://www.tasberry.com/	http://www.livejournal.com/users/kalis_realm/
http://yaeli.blogspot.com/	http://lifequest.diaryland.com/	http://www.livejournal.com/users/ninjakev7/
http://girlfromdallas.blogspot.com/	http://blog.walinchus.net/	http://www.livejournal.com/users/misbehaved/
http://nomibelle.blogspot.com/	http://www.pluggedout.com/blog/	http://www.livejournal.com/users/karmabeacon/

Bulmer's (1979) paradox of categorization allows the stories in the Weblogs to be separated into the general themes. This process helped organize the observation of the Weblog texts to show a snapshot of the types of narratives written.

After observing the narrative thematic trends of the 30 Weblogs, the general themes emerged (See Table 2) to show a snapshot of what stories were being told within the Weblogs.

Table 3: Most common Weblog narrative themes

Themes	Sub themes
Relationships	Family, friends, romantic
Health	Medical conditions, illness
Emotions	Feelings of love, happiness, sadness, etc.
Career	Job hunting
Travel	Itineraries, pictures
Creativity	Poetry, songs, fictional stories
Journalism	Links to news stories, retelling news stories, reporting news events
Social	Community, parties, gatherings of family and friends
Identity	Anonymous, revealing
Sex	Sexual encounters
Small Talk	Conversation with the readers
Blogging	Stories about blogging, updating the blog
School	Classes, projects
Money	Rent, savings, expenses
Lists	To-do lists, personal lists and listings of their day that is not in story form.

In most cases, Weblogs fit in more than one category. When analyzing Weblog narratives, 15 major story themes become prevalent. The following general themes were used to explore the idea that people use Weblogs as a ritualistic act of communication. The examples of the narratives were not altered. Misspellings, grammatical and punctuation errors were not corrected. The entries were cut and pasted from the blogs as is. As for determining gender, the Weblogs were not specific. "He" or "she" is only used because certain clues in the narratives revealed if the authors were women or men. Using "he" or "she" is only used to help explain the results. Weblogger or blogger is used as another term for Weblog author.

RESULTS

Storytelling

People who write Weblogs are storytellers. Only one Weblog did not contain any narratives in traditional storytelling form, and that was because the Weblog author only wrote poetry.

The stories told within Weblog entries were complete with a beginning, middle and end but sometimes authors only wrote one-line entries. Table 4 shows the general themes and an example narrative. Twenty-nine out of the 30 Weblogs incorporated the first seven topics in Table 4.

Table 4: Examples of Narrative Themes

Themes	Sub themes	Examples
Relationships	Family, friends, romantic	How can I ever trust him again, it isn't the first or the second time he has lied, my relationship with him was built on lies
Health	Medical conditions, illness	I know my mother blames herself, as far as my mental illness is concerned but I would never hurt someone physically unless I felt the need to defend myself
Emotions	Feelings of love, happiness, sadness, etc.	I'm tired of crying... I'm tired of being angry... I'm tired of being depressed... I'm tired of wanting to run away
Social	Community, parties, gatherings of family and friends	We had our engagement party at my parents place, lots of people came, it was great! And now we've finally asked my brother and Adam's sister to be in our wedding party
Small Talk	Talking to the reader, talking to themselves	Does anyone know any mountain-related jokes? Or can you make one up that would be funny? I need them for a Public Service Announcement I have to do in my Communication class
Identity	anonymous, revealing	the thing about my online life is- it's not the me i portray in my life
Blogging	Stories about blogging	I haven't felt much like writing recently, as I'm sure you can tell through the lack of entries... work situation is a mess
Lists	To do lists, personal lists, and listing of their day that is not quite in story form.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Try to get through the day... 2. Go to the gym... 3. Do the dishes 4. Vacuum the apartment
Career	Co-workers, work days	For the past four hours all I have done is make copies
Money	Rent, savings, expenses,	Our rent is going up... a bit of extra money will be very good
Travel	Photos, itineraries	Today was my last day in Tokyo. Blah. The plane leaves for San Francisco at 1945 which means I go BACK in time and arrive at 1100 today

Creativity	Poetry, songs, fictional stories	American Patriots, How can we serve you better? Win a laptop computer? Win a trip to Florida? Win a NEW LEXUS? We give you more of what you want
School	Classes, Projects	so I stayed up almost all night writing this stupid paper, which ended up turning out alright at best, and I finished slightly before the time it was due
Journalism	Links to news stories, retelling news stories, reporting news events	<u>Genentech</u> just got FDA approval for Avastin which is its colon cancer drug. It works by blocking VEGF which is a growth factor needed to make blood vessels
Sex	Sex	We exchanged a few hot kisses and Ted told me to remove my nylons which I quickly did

Note: The first seven topics were used in 29 of the 30 Weblogs.

Relationships

Twenty-nine out of the 30 Weblog authors wrote about a relationship. Weblog authors discussed friends, family and significant others. One Weblog author discussed his mother's attempted suicide. His Weblog entries were long and very detail oriented about his relationship not only with his mother, but also with his friends. Below is an excerpt:

Relationships Ex. 1 <http://www.livejournal.com/users/cinnamonlip/>

Mum made it through the year without a suicide attempt, which is a good thing (well, how else can you word that?) and I have my fingers crossed that the new program she's entered into will help free her from her past and all that haunts her, or at least allow her to view her inadvertent marriage to such pain as one would a loveless couple. The spark that ignites her misery lost in the drudgery of domesticity while she entertains thoughts of having an extra-marital affair with happiness. I'm hoping they elope, and her past doesn't even whimper when the divorce papers are served.

The next narrative is an example of a story about a romantic interest.

Relationships Ex. 2 <http://thisdarkgirl.diaryland.com/sogross.html>

So get this...A really pretty boy has been hanging onto my every word, asking me a million questions, and making coyly suggestive comments...

He one day tells me I'm beautiful in another language. (It was clearly meant to be even more ridiculously smooth... he thought I spoke the language and said he'd gone to learn it so he could speak to me in it).

I figure this one's a go, for sure.

Later that day, I find out he's moving in with his girlfriend.

Oops!

So who does the situation suck for more? Me or his girlfriend?
Christ... men! They never cease to convince me I should be a lesbian.

Health

Next, Weblog authors wrote about depression, illnesses, doctor visits and the most common problem, lack of sleep. The first example is about how one Weblog author awaits a diagnosis from the doctor and expresses frustration.

Health Ex. 1: http://www.livejournal.com/users/kalis_realm/

Went for the scan on tuesday. Its quite fun seeing inside yourself. The Radiologist said the lining looked unusually thick and we saw a black spot on my right ovary, lol we couldn't see the left one, it ran away. Was in a hell of alot more pain from the internal.....all i will say about that is OUCH!!

To make matters worse i picked up this stupid flu and i've been wrecked for days, its really pissing me off now.

I went to visit my friend Beccie in hospital, she lost a baby and they removed it and left stuff inside so she was back in. I really feel for her and dave, it just doesn't seem fair, its bad enough losing it without her having to keep going back to hospital. The best i can do at the moment is just be there for her.

So anyway i went to the doctor today to find out the result of my scan..... is what i got for 10 mins, so i asked and the conversation went like this....

me: have u got the results back yet (looking hopeful)

him: Yeah, its fine

Me: what do you mean FINE?

him: its fine

Me: but me, my mother and the woman who did it all saw something there

him: i dont know

Mum: is it inconclusive

him: yeah

I HATE MEN HATE FUCKING MEN i really know how tracy feels now (big hugs tracy), he just looked at me like i was a silly little girl and sent me off with more tramadol, for fuck sake i've taken over 180 tramadol in the last 2 months, why cant they do something. I have a bleeding cyst inside of me and it bloody hurts and they are doing nothing (the 3 docs i went to) so mum steps in and totaly lets rip in medical terms and the stupid so called doctor just sat there looking shocked. he had no idea, what to say or to do he just sat there looking stupid. I'd like to send a big HUGE hug to mum, she's a star.

So anyway i'm booked in to see 2 specialists and probably gonna have an opp. Dont like the idea of an opp but anythings better than this pain and that stupid doctor was just gonna send me away to suffer.....pah.

Next, is an example of a Weblog author's battle with mental illness. The example below shows a typical Weblog entry.

Health Ex. 2: <http://perceptionss.diaryland.com/>

I had yet another visit to the psychiatrist to visit today. It's strange most psychiatrist office's is that they're always a hole in the wall. A place you pass daily could be dealing out drugs legally, so sleep well tonight.

It wasn't like I chose to see this new psychiatrist but I was referred by my regular doctor to see a Dr. Wa---. This doctor was dressed as though he was from the turn of the century and may have known **Sigmund Freud** personally. The state is examining my case and realizing that my previous psychiatrist wasn't doing a good job. He basically asked all the time, "Am I homosexual?" He's a creepy old man who should see a doctor himself. This so-called doctor was weird but I kept seeing him every three months. I'm a faithful consumers so much so that I get my hair cut at the same place for over five years.

I think I don't enjoy change of any kind. My new psychiatrist just increases the dosages until he thinks I'm a certified zombie. Only I won't search out strangers because I have this insatiable urge to eat human brains. Anyway, not if I can help it because I like a good hamburger now and then.

The author incorporated a picture at the bottom of each entry.

Emotions

Many bloggers discussed their emotions openly. Below is an example of how Weblog authors used this forum to deal with life's emotional vicissitudes.

The first example, the author wrote the entry as a poem

Emotion Ex. 1 <http://www.livejournal.com/users/karmabeacon/>

i hate these moods. flatness.
emotional vacancy. emptiness.
my senses feel deadened.
i'm so tired. but i cant sleep.
so i'm gonna sit here and drink
till i get emotional. and then listen
to music, and cry and dance
around my room till i'm exhausted.
i don't have any reason to cry,

but it'll happen anyway. i have
everything i ever wanted. a hundred
times more than i deserve and i'm
still unsatisfied.
better sad than vacant, i suppose

Occasionally the author would post a one-line message for the day. This is a common message about the author's emotional status for the day.

Emotion Ex. 2 <http://www.livejournal.com/users/misbehaved/>

I am officially in a bad mood. *stomps off to finish work day*

All 30 Weblogs used emoticons. An emoticon is a small icon reflecting moods such as happy☺ and sad☹. Many entries consisted of one-line entries using emoticons or as this entry showed a stage direction.

Social

Weblog authors discussed their social calendars extensively. Authors created an itinerary of their fun moments with friends, family and significant others.

The first example is a glimpse of one author's social life.

Social Ex. 1 <http://www.livejournal.com/users/princessodyssey/>

Today was my friend Allison's wedding. Ya know, I would kind of expect myself to maybe get depressed at a wedding, especially one where I didn't know anyone all that well, but this wedding was really joyful. I believe God was smiling on this wedding. And I really had fun.

It was almost kind of hope-inspiring.

Allison was just smiling and smiling. And shakin' her bouquet and gettin' down on the dance floor-she had great music. Disco and "YMCA" and the "Twist" and all kinds of fun stuff. I really had fun and that's really cool for me.

And the other day I went to see *Peter Pan* with Rachel, Shiela, and Kyra. It's a great

movie. When the kids were up on the fluffy pink clouds, I thought, *Candy clouds of lullaby*, lol. And we went to the mall and I got a Cabbage Patch keychain and a pretty Evanescence button for my car! After the mall, Rach and I went back to the S's and hung out. Dance Dance Revolution and Kingdom Hearts fun! And hangin' with the girlies was fun.

I called James tonight, hoping to talk to him about what happened when he visited. But alas, he's not home, so...maybe another time. I would really like to talk through it, because it's on my chest, and I'd like to get it off.

Another Weblog author discussed a night out.

Social Ex. 2 <http://www.livejournal.com/users/notagain/>

So it turns out I can be considered attractive on occasion*. Nice to know. When your social life mostly comprises watching bad television curled up with your beloved and occasional sedate trips to the pub to drink coke and not smoke, the opportunities to be made aware of this are tiny indeed.

But Friday night I went out with some friends from work and had a blast. First a few drinks (turns out my friends simply don't believe me if I say I don't want a drink and provide me with one anyway - they know me too well. Sadly, they don't know I'm on Weightwatchers and can't afford the Points for the alcohol...), then on to a pub I would never have expected in Cambridge - The Devonshire Arms.

Sounds all very country-pub and cosy fires ish, but is in fact a Jamaican hang-out, with no windows and covered in signs about being barred and getting chucked out for doing drugs on the premises. Enormous luminous Jamaican paintings and some really GOOD R&B. Not the churned out crap in the charts, but actually GOOD stuff. Much boogying had to happen. Some interesting people there too, including a granny in a beret strutting her funky stuff and trying to seduce Moira's boyfriend, and a guy whose dancing style was... well, I thought he might have been having a seizure to begin with.

Also men who wanted to dance with me. Men who **asked** to dance with me, which is surely to god a first? Don't they usually just try to grope you?

And randomly, there was a friend from home in there too - Mel came up to do a PhD 4 years ago but I've never run into her until now. Strange to find her there.

So yeah, it was a good night, even if i did still stink of fags two days later :)

The rest of the weekend was mostly OU work. I finished my report. Anthony worked until 6am on Friday night. Explains his lie-in, but mine was pure unadulterated laziness.

*(And I am not not not wanting people to make any comments about this because I'll die of embarrassment. I feel very conceited saying it at all (and am, frankly) but if this diary is going to be my only record of my life, in 40 years time I want to know that, just occasionally, men found me attractive.)

Small Talk

Weblog authors talked directly to the reader frequently as shown in the example above.

The 29 Weblogs that wrote directly to the reader commonly referred to the reader as *you*.

Small Talk Ex 1: http://www.livejournal.com/users/celtic_raven/

Do you know why I hate being sick so much?

I haven't felt much like writing recently, as I'm sure you can tell through the lack of entries...

Another example of small talk is a direct message to the reader.

Small Talk Ex 2: http://www.liverjournal.com/users/kalis_realm

I'd just like to say to my friends that read my journal... I'm sorry about the prezies guys, i just hadn't got the money, i'll make it up on your birthdays I promise.

Identity

Overtime the identities of Webloggers became vivid. Authors revealed their identities such as gender, age, and marital status, which readers are likely to take at face value. Below is an example of an author who revealed that he is single man.

Identity Ex.1 <http://42short.blogspot.com/>

the old me used to look ahead and see kids. The old me was anxious to settle down and get started. the old me picked out names. the old me envisioned long talks and teaching them things. The old me worr

ied about these imaginary kids and the first time they got sick. The old me wasn't sure what else would happen with jobs and wriging and the rest of it, but he was pretty sure there'd be kids, so he was excited.

Then things changed and I got older and, just in the past few years, later is becoming now and it's starting to look different. I'm not so sure I see kids anymore and I'm not really sure how I feel about that.

Part of me is disappointed. Part of me thinks there's still time. Part of me sits at towrk and hears a kid wailing for no good reason and is thankful that there are no kids. Part of me wonders whether he will become one of those people he used to work with—late-30's

early 40's liberal types who end up adopting a kid from a foreign country that nobody's heard of and can't pronounce and naming them after old jazz musicians or mid-twentieth-century baseball players. Part of me wants one of those cool three-wheeled strollers with the mountain bike tires on them. Part of me, the selfish part, thinks about how much sacrifice would be involved and wonders if maybe the way things are isn't so terrible, but then, another part of me reads something like this and decides yes, it would be worth it. Part of me is glad that none of this has to be decided today by 5 o'clock and realizes that any hesitation would go away as soon as I met the right girl.

One common saying was "in real life." Below is an example of one author's belief that his/her identity was different offline than online.

Identity Ex. 2 <http://blog.walinchus.net/>

In real life, I'm not one who talks a lot. I joke more so than in this blog, but it is not in my personality to ask those probing and deep questions.

Blogging

All 30 blogs discussed why they blogged, the difficulties of blogging and what others think of their blog. The five examples that follow, discussed writing and blogging directly:

Blogging Ex. 1: http://www.livejournal.com/users/celtic_raven/

I haven't felt much like writing recently, as I'm sure you can tell through the lack of entries.

Blogging Ex, 2: <http://thisdarkgirl.diaryland.com/>

I must say I admire my patience with this site. You all know how goddamned long it can take to get to write an entry now and I have a VERY short attention span. But I'm still here.

I don't write much, but hey, I'm still alive, which is impressive considering I was going to trash this whole site. I honestly miss it a lot in my life. I needed this place to talk. Now I just talk the ears off of people around me and I'm no doubt starting to look a little egocentric. Its like getting over an addiction.

Blogging Ex. 3: <http://cumwhore.blogspot.com/>

I'm always touched by the amount of mail that I receive when I post an entry after a long period of not blogging. Call me needy, but knowing that there are so many people who are "hanging in there" while I go through my Ted Crisis makes me feel a lot better. I will warn everyone, however, that I am no longer opening emails with attachments. They go straight into the delete bin. There are simply too many viruses out there for me to open attachments from people I don't know. For those who sent me pictures, I'm afraid they went unviewed :-(

For every person who writes me a thoughtful email, there are plenty who write me to tell me:

- ~ how much they detest my blog (while, apparently, reading it every day);
- ~ how unsexy this blog is (while, undoubtedly, getting hard or wet reading most of it);
- ~ how glad they are that Ted dumped me (apparently not reading closely enough to understand WHY Ted and I are no longer together);
- ~ how "pathetic" they think I am for being so sex-obsessed (while, I'm sure, wishing they were getting more in their own lives);
- ~ how poorly I write (I have a healthy salary that suggests otherwise).

Me thinks thou doth protest too much ;-)

Notice at the end, the Weblogger uses an emoticon that represents a wink. Either Webloggers used manual emoticons as the one shown above or emoticons that were provided by the Weblog.

Lists

At some point in every blog, authors wrote a list. The three examples that follow are typical list entries:

Lists Ex. 1: <http://www.livejournal.com/users/misbehaved/>

two things

1) snow sucks (that's right it's snowing, and is supposed to snow tomorrow too)

2) I'm getting my hair colored today!

Ok, maybe three things...

3) I paid off a credit card today. Woo hoo!

Lists Ex. 2: <http://www.livejournal.com/users/misbehaved/>

1. Try to get through the day at Genco. (I know it's gonna be a bad one, I'll elaborate later.)
2. Go to the gym after work if I'm not too exhausted.
3. do the dishes when I get home
4. Vacuum the apartment
5. Clean up the kitchen
6. Clean up the bathroom
7. Sit down and have something to eat.
8. Watch some tv.
9. Go to bed

Let's see how all this goes.

Lists Ex. 3: <http://www.livejournal.com/users/notagain/>

So I was feeling pretty bad by the time I got home. But then I opened the door to the lounge and saw, in this order:

- * Pretty flowers on the table
- * The table laid for dinner
- * Our nice wine glasses set out
- * New candles on the table
- * Anthony in the kitchen
- * Anthony in the kitchen, washing up the last few things he'd used to cook dinner
- * Anthony, in the kitchen, washing up the last few things he'd used to cook dinner - freshly shaved and wearing a smart shirt.

Below is an example of a blog not in a typical list format. The list does reveal a part of the author's personality.

Lists Ex. 4: <http://girlfromdallas.blogspot.com/>

here's just a random list of other things i love or that bring me happiness... a connection with another person, a good book, music, a great workout, traveling, art and expression, water in almost every form, eye to eye communication/understanding, happy endings, romantic men, great dads, through thick and thin friends, doing service for others, bravery and sacrifice.

Career/Work

Career status was an important part of 20 Weblogs. One Weblog author used his Weblog not only to promote his Weblog software, but his life. Below is an entry about his work project:

Work Ex. 1 <http://www.pluggedout.com/blog/>

At present I'm sitting here at work, after spending the greater part of the day re-installing a server on a client site. Their original system was working fine right up to the point where somebody else installed something on it - and hay presto, our stuff didn't work any more...

It has to be said that the new server they have aquired for the job is the fastest Windows based machine I have ever seen - it did cost 7000ukp though. Get this - twin 3Ghz Xeons with 512Mb level 1 cache each. 2Gb main memory, RAID, UPS... you name it, this server has it. I timed it on reboot - even with getting the SCSI raid drives up and running, it was booting in less than 20 seconds. Incredible. It even serves dot net applications impressively quickly.

One Weblog author discussed his unemployment status. This entry is about the application process.

Work Ex. 2 <http://42short.blogspot.com/>

i just spent the better part of three hours completing two job application forms. i don't understand this process. basically, i transcribed everything that is already on my resume into little blocks on a five-page form which then gets submitted with...a copy of my resume. when i am president, i will make all application forms a single page long and they will only have spaces for things like *salary* and *phone number of old boss* since those are the only two things i can think of that don't get written on the resume-proper. i have no idea what the purpose of this redundancy is besides to ensure that my left hand remains permanently cramped for the duration of wednesday.

on second thought, if i slip into thinking like a manager for a moment, i'll bet the purpose of the application forms is to make sure you can *keep it inside the lines* or so that they can do a handwriting analysis and find out if you're the type who'll snap or steal office supplies.

Finally, one Weblog author wrote about a bad day at work:

Work Ex. 3: <http://nomibelle.blogspot.com/>

Just got back from my morning classes and I'm really stressed (especially considering I have to leave for another class in ten minutes). I went to the second floor of Capen to print out my lecture notes and syllabus which I figured wouldn't take too long because the most recent printouts were from five minutes before I walked in. So I hit print and waited... and waited... and waited, until I realized that the same person's stuff had been printing for over ten minutes. I hate this kind of crap!! I wish I knew who was doing this so I could find them and be like "seriously, stop it, you're pissing everyone off and no one

gives a fuck about what you're printing. Go buy your own fucking printer and stop wasting school funds. You're the reason we can't afford decent bands to play Fall Fest". Yeah, I'm cranky. Gotta run

One important observation among all 30 Weblogs was the informal, conversational writing as in the example above.

Money

Fourteen Webloggers discussed their money problems. The first example discussed how an author's salary was not enough to purchase a bike.

Money Ex. 1: <http://42short.blogspot.com/>

i still haven't purchased a new bike yet. a few months ago, i wrote about how i really wanted one. it takes me a long time to make major purchases. yes, a bike qualifies as a major purchase, especially since i am a public servant trying to get by on a meager librarian's salary.

Finally, the next Weblog author's bank account was frozen. Several entries followed on how the author survived without access to a bank account.

Money Ex. 2: <http://www.livejournal.com/users/misbehaved/2004/01/26/>

This totally [f...ing] sucks. My checking account is frozen. All my freaking money is in my checking account. I have absolutley no access to my money. I need to buy groceries, I need to do laundry. Am I supposed to starve and wear dirty clothes? The bank doesn't open until 9. Even after I go return all this money, my account is still going to be frozen until about Tuesday. How am I supposed to live?

Travel

Ten Weblogs discussed traveling. Webloggers shared not only their vacation stories, but pictures as well.

The first example is an author's itinerary of a vacation from Key West.

Travel Ex. 1 <http://www.queenofindiana.com/>

It's Picture Time, boys and girls!

Here is a selection of photos from Miami/Key West:

Lighthouse at Bill Baggs on Key Biscayne - it almost looks like a stormy day, but it was just morning clouds passing by - it was blue skies before I left the key! Behind me a photo shoot with kids was going on.

Playing with Micro mode at Fairchild Botanical Gardens...

One

Two

Three

I need this green pathway in my yard!

Attack of the Iguanas!!! They were all over the place at Fairchild and I guess they are a bit of a problem because they eat flowers BIG TIME!

I told you I took pictures of bananas!

A cuban crocodile (where is his cigar?).

If the Conch Train in Key West would have slowed a bit more down, I might have had a better picture of Hemingway's house. That place was half the reason I talked myself into driving all the way there and back!

Only a few interesting characters out on Duval Street at twelve noon on a Tuesday --

including this dude (who had major tippage in his little bucket already!)

I don't know who these dudes are, but I snapped this shot from the Conch Train at the Southernmost Point in the Continental USA. Cuba is only 90 miles away -- closer than the mainland of Florida!

Yeah, I won't be starting a photography business any time soon...I promise!

Tuesday

I dropped off Ernie at his office and headed down to Key West. On my way, I kept thinking about how pathetic it was to drive to Key West alone and JUST FOR THE DAY. I spent more time ONE WAY in the car than I spent actually in Key West. Oh well, I saw it and I want to go back! (Even if my healing blisters from my new sandals are telling me "NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!")

Tuesday evening we headed to the "Miracle Mile" in Coral Gables. This is a nice

section of Coral Way (also 22nd Street I believe) with wedding boutiques, couture fabric shops, salons, art galleries, restaurants, and more. We ate at Les Halles, which Ernie blogged about. He's the resident foodie...:)

Only one author dedicated the Weblog to his travels. The blog,

<http://walkingixus.blogspot.com/>, contained pictures as well as descriptions of trips. Most other

Weblogs just discussed transportation and brief trips back home to see family and friends.

Creativity

Only one Weblog was devoted to poetry. The author took lines from her spam email and created poetry.

Creative Ex. 1 http://www.sperare.com/spam_poetry/blogger.html

Declamation, riverside -

I have referral anxiety,
a very small penis,
I am overweight, [and]
Don't have a college degree.

[but]

I have gasoline, right now, [and]
A Really Cool Blanket.
Age Reversal, [and]
A ten dollar coupon for you.
Check out this girl
I think she's in love with you.

Another author wrote a short story without telling readers if it was true or not. The blogger said she only knew for sure.

Creative Ex. 2 <http://thisdarkgirl.diaryland.com/shorttale.html>

As I'm currently getting no action to speak of, I thought I'd tell a little story. True? Only I know for sure.

Sitting next to him at the bar, I find myself tapping my feet, shifting around. I suggest alcohol and sound all too enthusiastic when he suggests a pitcher. I know what's in store, but it's awkward, surreal. I try to act sexy, to let my cleavage show a little, to brush my hair off my neck. It seems so silly, when there's no necessary enticement. As I move into my second drink, the conversation flows a little more easily.

The bar is small, but not cozy. They know him, but they've never seen me. They don't ask questions. I find it hard to look at him, anticipation getting the better of me. I small talk about my life. He doesn't really know anything about me and it doesn't really matter.

I excuse myself to go to the washroom. I shut the door and hold it closed for a second. What am I doing? I stare at the wall for a second and let time pass. There's a stark, full-length mirror on the wall, and I move to stand in front of it. I definitely feel sexier than I look. My clothes are flattering and I adjust my breasts to try and create cleavage that I certainly don't possess. But still, not sexy in my eyes. I picture my body without clothes, the way I'd like it to look, and then, the reality of my curves and all of my insecurities. I picture myself moving with confidence, naked and vulnerable. The thought terrifies me, and I remind myself that that's why lies ahead tonight.

I run my hands over my breasts, and try to feel sexual again. I run cold water over my hands and fix my hair. Time to finish this night. What's done is done.

Webloggers incorporated poems, song lyrics and creative fiction, into their entries. Lyrics of songs were placed in entries to help describe an author's mood or to help explain an experience.

School/Education

Only 10 Webloggers discussed school. Unfortunately, not one of the Webloggers used their Weblog to detail pedagogical projects. Authors' discussed their experiences at school and referred to projects.

The typical school narrative discussed college papers.

School Ex. 1: <http://www.livejournal.com/users/ninjakev7/?skip=20>

so I stayed up almost all night writing this stupid paper, which ended up turning out alright at best, and I finished slightly before the time when it was due... this would have been cause for celebration, but when I went downstairs to get my bike and head for the library to print it out, I had a flat tire... so I call the professor and leave him a message and then email him the text right at the moment of the deadline

One Weblogger did use her Weblog to discuss her academic goals.

School Ex. 2: <http://www.livejournal.com/users/princessodyssey/2004/01/26/>

Am kind of grumpy at the moment, as corn can actually be a difficult subject to find the right kind of research on, and I am getting tired of looking.

*Have a lot to do, but there are 2 programs here at my university that I actually want to attend. That's unusual for me, but these 2 things sound really interesting. One involves Frederick Buechner, a Christian novelist and preacher who's

speaking tonight. He has a reputation for keeping things real and being appreciated by believers *and* nonbelievers. It's weird because I just read about him a Phillip Yancey book (*Soul Survivor*) and now he's at my university so I really want to take advantage of this opportunity.

The other thing I want to go to this week is a presentation about mountain top removal. I would really like to have some good, solid information about what is going on with that and what I can do about it, but I'm afraid that the people who are going to be at this presentation will be a bit...dramatic. I've researched just a bit about one lady who's supposed to speak and she seems okay, though. I'm looking forward to it.

Since the Frederick Buechner presentation is supposed to be tonight, I'll leave you with a quote from one of his writings:

If I were called upon to state in a few words the essence of everything I was trying to say both as a novelist and as a preacher, it would be something like this: Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are key moments and life itself is grace. (From *Now and Then*; quoted in Phillip Yancey's *Soul Survivor*)

Journalism

Only three Weblogs discussed current events regularly. One married couple's Weblog discussed the death of a cyclist. Notice the Weblog author does not link to an outside source.

News Ex.1: <http://www.pnak.com/index.html>

I haven't been posting lately for whatever reason, but it seems like a lot of people are dying, which prompts me to post. I hope to break this trend soon.

The cycling world lost an amazing climber on Sunday. "The Pirate," Marco Pantani, always guaranteed a good race. He was the one who followed Lance Armstrong up the treacherous climbs of Mont Ventoux, taking the stage victory from Armstrong and proving his critics wrong. (Armstrong says he gave Pantani the stage win; they both rolled over the finish line at about the same time. You decide.) Pantani was the guy who won the Tour and the Giro in the same year. Pantani was the guy you loved to hate.

Pantani was also the guy who had to suffer through ten years of doping charges and accusations, first starting with the Festina affair and then snowballing over the next decade. It seemed like the harder he tried to comeback as a clean rider, the heavier the stress and criticism became. No matter how well he did, his performance was always attached to doping. He died, sadly, with conspiracies against him as his last thoughts. No

suicide note, no cry for help. Not anything like the man who once ruled the mountains.

Farewell to cycling's black sheep.

One Weblogger discussed how news annoyed him rather than a specific current event. His Weblog entries are very informative about new technology.

News Ex.2 <http://www.pluggedout.com/blog>

Wouldn't it be great if you switched the news on one day, and the newsreader said "There is no news today, so we will be showing Will and Grace an hour early."

Does it annoy you that all the news is bad news? Is good news not newsworthy any more? Could they not tell us about something great that has happened, or something unusual? Why does all the news have to be disasters? Do they not realize that if they didn't report on terrorists then they would lose the point to terrorizing anybody? (i.e. nobody would take any notice).

Finally, the following Weblog included hypertext links and news articles. This was a typical entry for one blogger.

News Ex. 3: <http://yaeli.blogspot.com/>

The Red Cross decided it needed to put in its two-anti-semitic-cents in to the discussion on the fence.

The article says, "In Geneva, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) declared that the barrier in its current form, winding well inside the West Bank and trapping thousands of Palestinians in enclaves, violated international humanitarian law."

I have never seen so many people get their panties all up in a bunch over a stinking fence. There are so many countries around the world that have had to resort to building fences and yet Israel is the only one where it seems to be such an international issue. The world can just back off and let Israel do what it needs to do. Start holding Israel to the same standards that you hold the rest of the nations in the world. I am sick of Israel being expected to be ten notches above everyone else.

Sex

Only three Weblogs concentrated on explicit sex details. The other 27 Weblogs talked more about relationships and romance.

Below are three excerpts from three different Weblogs.

Sex Ex. 1: <http://girlfromdallas.blogspot.com/>

tonight, what I would consider the best sex... as i think of the various men i know- they way they make me feel... and consider the invitations to meet with them, my mind drifts... sex-making love-all of the experience within a couple of days... passion and heat that bounces off the fucking walls of the room. i'm up for it-i want this man to want to please me-without apparent needs of his own. He would receive more in return, than he ever hoped for. kissing... light and fun-teasing-biting-deep and longing-all out mouth fucking. Touching... delicate... appreciative, exploring in nature-to rubbing, squeezing and kneading ... really needing.

This example is from what the author called her sex blog. She only discussed her sex life and rarely discussed other topics.

Sex Ex. 2: <http://cumwhore.blogspot.com/>

Ted and I discussed the possibility of a threesome and much to my surprise, Ted suggested Kevin as a possible partner. Initially, I was stunned by the suggestion but as Ted explained himself, it started to make sense. With Kevin, our privacy is assured. Kevin has his faults but I will say about him that he never EVER discussed our sex life with anyone despite the fact that it would have given him huge bragging rights on some occasions. He is a sexually safe partner. I can attest to the fact that he practices safe sex and is regularly checked for HIV, AIDS and STDs (though I would insist on condoms regardless) and insists that his partners do the same. Despite the fact that he likes group sex, he will only participate in it with a select group of people that he's known for a long period, who also practice safe sex. There are no guarantees, obviously, but Kevin is, as Ted said, a much safer bet than anyone else we could come up with. Ted also suspects (and he's right) that Kevin would defer to Ted's dominance in the situation and allow Ted to steer the action. Kevin isn't what I'd call a switch, but he DOES understand that when a couple lays down the rules, those rules are golden.

Another Weblog, but not considered a sex blog, discussed her sex life with her husband. This author did discuss topics outside of sex.

Sex Ex. 3: <http://www.tasberry.com/>

I haven't been doing much the past few days. On Sunday I layed around naked till my husband came home, then I took a bath and layed around naked some more. Yesterday I lounged around in some shortbus ready attire that I put together with my eyes closed. I didn't even comb my hair all day yesterday. I looked like Don King with boobs. When my husband got home I took a bath and put on my red lingerie that he bought for me, gave him a few yanks and some Tasberry Pie, then I got naked, ate some Chinese Spare

ribs with him, then layed around naked for the rest of the night. Today I got up to go to the gym, but I looked outside and it was still snowy. I layed back down. Naked. Me and the kids got hungry not too long ago so we ordered some Buffalo Wings and a Mad Cow Sammich. Yes folks, I had a cheeseburger. Me and Hubbster broke down and had a couple last week and I had another today. We figured what the hell. The incubation period is so ??? that I could already be dying from a burger I had five years ago so I might as well have another. With my job I'll probably die a painful insane death anyway so what the shit? I just called Slush to see what she was up to but she was cleaning her son's room and could not talk. So now I'm going to lay back down. Naked.

DISCUSSION

The examples in this study provide a snapshot of personal Weblogs, which relate the everyday lives and rituals of their authors (Carey, 1989). The rituals of communication and storytelling may be found within each Weblog. All 30 Weblogs confirm that narratives are everywhere, that “human lives need and merit being narrated” (Ricoeur, 1983). Since most Weblog authors are not celebrities, journalists, or novelists, they are writing their own unheralded stories to record their existence (Carey, 1989).

This study demonstrates the similarities and differences between Weblogs and traditional diaries. Both blogs and diaries are temporal, with blog entries listed in sequential order with a time/date stamp. Each dated entry includes a narrative that is structured with a beginning, middle and end, and it equates to a human life story just as a traditional diary does within time. The Weblogs keep to a standard structural form, yet each had an individual style. Just as Thoreau used homemade pencils and paper out of birch bark, bloggers create their own space with background colors, font styles, and graphics.

Unlike readers of traditional diaries, readers of blogs may participate in them by posting messages. This study found that bloggers address the audience directly by using the word “you.” Many traditional diarists would use the implied audience phrase such as “dear diary” (Kitzmann, 2003), but Weblogs have an actual audience who participate. It is a developing practice that readers of Weblogs participate in the stories (Blood, 2002) and that reading Weblogs of like-minded thoughts and ideas usually transforms Weblog readers into Weblog authors. Blog authors started a conversation and created a gathering place for people who wanted to write and share their own stories and opinions. The communication ritual theory applies to Weblogs because blogs share timely stories and create communities. Outsiders rarely see a contemporary

person's written diary or make comments in its margins. On the Web, diarists write in real-time for an audience, unlike traditional diaries. Often readers will respond either on the Weblog page, by email or on their own Weblogs (Kitzmann, 2003). This study found that the audience does interact with bloggers. One example was found in the Weblog, <http://cumwhore.blogspot.com/>, in which the author listed criticisms she received from her audience:

- how much they detest my blog (while, apparently, reading it every day);
- how unsexy this blog is
- how glad they are that Ted dumped me (apparently not reading closely enough to understand WHY Ted and I are no longer together);
- how "pathetic" they think I am for being so sex-obsessed (while, I'm sure, wishing they were getting more in their own lives);
- how poorly I write (I have a healthy salary that suggests otherwise).

She also noted that she deleted all emails with attachments, which may indicate that Webloggers are becoming gatekeepers of their own communities.

Weblogs are also created within communities, where there is an outpouring of support for other bloggers. For example, two Weblogs that posted sexual content linked to other sex blogs, a demonstration of how like-minded people read similar content. All 30 Weblogs had a side bar that listed their favorite blogs. Traditional diarists do not have opportunities to recommend reading another person's diary.

A Weblog author can also become anonymous online by creating a different identity or user name. This study demonstrated that readers do not know the identity of the Weblog author. Statements in blogs such as 8-point agenda's journal revealed that he was a man: *My name is (a), I'm a guy, I'm lonely, and I'm tired of waiting, and I'm tired of trying.* 8-point agenda's

journal never revealed a real name of a person. In both diaries and Weblogs, people may not share their true identity, but clues such as mentioning girlfriends, their birthdates, work, and other details, help the reader create the author as one would a character in a novel.

The writing styles of diaries and Weblogs are both informal. It became apparent that many Weblog authors ignored the rules of the English language. Weblog authors used curse words, slang and acronyms and would write in short cathartic phrases: “started my job today” or “it sucks ass.” Cathartic writing exaggerates emotions because the author is writing under pressure or under emotional strain (Rainer, 1978). In traditional diaries, the emotions emerge by the sloppy handwriting, but in Weblogs the authors would write short sentences, curse words, and single out their emotions such as typing a simple emotion in ways such as: “*sigh*.” Consequently, people consider traditional dairies as an informal writing style because no one is judging the writing style of private diaries (1978). Traditional diary writing is a forum where people can explore themselves without explaining it to others, but a Weblog is a public forum where an audience is reading the entries. Blood (2002) explained that Weblog writing is a good writing exercise because “writing short is hard— and very good for you. Seeking to distill your thoughts to the fewest words, you will find out what you really think, and you’ll work even harder to find the precise term to express your meaning. Paradoxically, writing short also spurred me to write longer pieces” (p. 29). This study demonstrated that people wrote short and long entries. Also, since the writing styles differed from very descriptive to hurried, cathartic writing appeared in blogs, just as in traditional diaries.

All stories had an emotional tone, which could explain the writing style of each author. Authors expressed many feelings such as anger, happiness, sadness, stress, and depression. Research has shown that people who are more open about their emotions to others tend to benefit

more than those who do not provide an outlet for their feelings (Graybeal, Sexton, & Pennebaker, 2002). In fact, most all of the Weblog authors expressed some type of emotion in their writing everyday. Therapists use traditional diaries as a tool for patients to write down their emotions and feelings. By observing Weblogs, people may get the same therapeutic benefits, by interacting with other bloggers. These actions support the uses and gratification theory. Consequently, “a blogger who complains weekly that she is tired of her job will begin, eventually, to enumerate the particular circumstances that make her so miserable. Writing the same thing over and over, she will confront the problems she is not addressing and be moved to make a change...and she will find a record of the progress of her life” (Blood, 2002, p. 29).

As the tradition of writing a private diary shifts to a public realm, people who seek out these new forums use them to share their views and opinions with an actual audience. With millions of Weblogs on diverse and narrow topics, audiences can find a voice similar to their own. People like to seek out and interact with others (Heath & Bryant, 2000) and to find a common bond. 42short, one of the 30 blogs studied, said, “Weblogs have made it easier for me to meet people with common interests. Following other blogger’s hyperlinks to music, film books, art that I might not otherwise hear about” (42short, personal correspondence, December 23, 2003). 42short not only created his own blog, but also looked for other bloggers with the same interests. Traditional diaries are for one person and not for the masses. This study demonstrated that Weblogs help create a public voice for the blogger and like-minded communities for an audience.

Surprisingly, religion was not a prevalent theme in this small selection of Weblogs, even though spirituality is a theme found in many traditional journals such as the Quakers and Puritans’ diaries (Mallon, 1984; Fothergill, 1974). The 30 Weblogs analyzed in this paper had

passing thoughts of religion, for example, “Pray for me,” but no one told stories of a religious affiliation or a story about faith.

As travel journals were important in the 14th century, Weblogs documented authors’ journeys. They shared pictures and itineraries and many of the Weblogs just mentioned passing business trips or trips to visit friends and family. One Weblog devoted his blog to pictures and travel experiences. In this way Weblogs mirror traditional journals.

Mallon (1984) organized diaries/journals into precise categories because the authors he explored wrote on specific topics. Weblog authors wrote stories about familiarities. Diarists were chroniclers, travelers, ill, therapeutic, news gatherers, and career oriented. Weblog authors did not write daily about one theme, but varied their stories in their postings. A chronicler is the best category to place at least 29 of the 30 Weblogs. The other Weblog was dedicated to writing poetry from the spam email she received.

This study found that many bloggers referred to themselves as a diarist or a writer. One blogger, 42short, considered himself a writer and not a diarist because he wanted a forum that he could write in daily. 42short responded to an email questionnaire that was sent in a pilot study to all 30 Weblogs (only three bloggers responded). 42short explained why he considered himself a writer instead of a diarist:

At first I was going to say diarist, but, to me, “diary” implies something more personal, a book with a lock and a little key, the thoughts meant only for yourself. I think people might start out keeping a Weblog like a diary, but the fact that everyone can read it makes it very different from a diary. Knowing that other people are reading your Weblog, I think colors what you choose to write about and the way that you write, even if this only happens subconsciously (42short, personal correspondence, December 23, 2003).

It was found that the three blogs that did include news articles were not writing journalistic articles. The bloggers incorporated the news into their daily stories. One must

consider Weblogs as a place where people meet to share ideas, stories and opinions. The technology is easy to use and a person can become published almost instantly to share opinions either about his/her personal life or about current events.

According to Perseus Development Corporation, only 9.9% of the active blogs linked to the 2,875 traditional news sites online. As Perseus concluded, linking to news is only a fraction of what authors include in blogs. Only three Weblogs discussed current events and regularly embedded links in the written entries.

In the mainstream media, journalists sometimes rely on Weblogs as sources for information as journalists did during Sept. 11, 2001. Journalists would never consider a traditional diary an accessible source. Only one Weblogger dedicated most of his entries to current events because he said, "I love sharing things I learn with anyone willing to listen. Much in the same way, I love hearing about other people's incredible experiences. Shit, that's what life is about, learning from each other so that we can shed light on the darkness right" (<http://yaeli.blogspot.com/>). In fact, many journalists such as Rod Dreher, *The Dallas Morning News* associate editorial page editor, said, "Blogs are here to stay. Simply put they are the most exciting thing happening in journalism today" (Dreher, 2003, p.18A). This study, however, only one Weblogger created links regularly to news articles.

Overall, Weblogs and diaries both share in the ritual of storytelling. The Weblog is simply one more venue for creating narratives. The major differences between diaries and Weblogs are those created by the differences between writing on a printed page and publishing in a digital universe. Weblogs are much more than just diaries; they are electronic stories that allow readers to participate. This unique quality of interacting with authors fits nicely with the uses and gratifications theory, which posits that a viewer, reader or listener chooses a medium

according to how it fits his or her own needs, rather than according to how the medium's creator wishes to affect him or her.

This study also shows the common tradition of storytelling through diary keeping, as it has been extended into cyberspace. But it is a tradition with a difference. While the traditional diary still can cloak a writer's most private thoughts, the blogger may record those thoughts for millions to read, choose to filter them, or limit access through electronic gatekeeping, such as passwords. Overall, "for those who want to have an easily accessible record of their thoughts and communicate with others whom they may or may not know personally, online journaling is the best of all possible worlds" (Conhaim, 2003, p. 28).

Future Research

While this study focused on personal Weblogs, future research could analyze how corporate entities, particularly news organizations and their readers are using Weblogs. One such study could demonstrate the viability and wisdom of using Weblogs as journalistic sources. Another could focus on how blogs are extending news organizations' opinion writing into the blogosphere. Although many people create only personal electronic stories, columnists think of Weblogs as new competition because "thousands of opinionated observers spend their days examining and writing about every move made by newsmakers and the media that cover them" (Glaser, 2003, ¶ 3).

Although this study found only one blogger commenting on news stories with the traditional hypertext links to articles, these types of Weblogs help filter the news for readers.

J.D. Lasica (2002), editor for *Online Journalism Review*, said

Weblogs are the anti-newspaper in some ways. Where the editorial process can filter out errors and polish a piece of copy to a fine sheen, too often the machinery turns even the best prose limp, lifeless, sterile and homogenized. A huge part of blogs' appeal lies in

their unmediated quality. Blogs tend to be impressionistic, telegraphic, raw, honest, individualistic, highly opinionated and passionate, often striking an emotional chord (¶4).

Future research is needed to understand the appeal of writing such commentary about the media on a regular basis and to examine what mainstream media lack that blogs do not. In fact, one observation about Weblogs suggested that blogs be incorporated into media Web sites because, “Weblog writing may not often sparkle but it often surprises. Blogs unearth the strange, the quirky, the interesting nugget that would have remained hidden” (Lasica, 2002, ¶ 6).

Like the shift from personal diary writing to blogging, traditional journalism is shifting because

The use of a medium such as the Internet obviously involves not only active participation in the traditional audience roles of selecting and processing media messages, but active participation in creating them, as well. However, the traditional receivers are not the only ones profoundly affected by this change. The traditional senders of media messages—the journalists—are faced not just with a new delivery method but with what may be a fundamental shift in their role in the communication process (Singer, 1998, ¶ 3).

Recently, *Time* reported that Russ Kick posted photographs on his blog of coffins of U.S. soldiers’ who died in Iraq after filing a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) form (Grossman, 2004). The military usually prohibits photographs of such scenes, but the pictures he posted found their way to the front pages of newspapers. His blog received 4 million hits after releasing the pictures (2004). According to Grossman (2004), “blogs represent everything the Web was always supposed to be: a mass medium controlled by the masses, in which getting heard depends solely on having something to say and the moxie to say it” (p. 66).

As more blogs are produced, the more opinions will be available. A person can immediately publish a story without any censored content. It is known that, “blogs react with lightning speed to the news of the day, which is why Old Media are often trailing them” (Dreher, 2004, 18A). It is important for researchers to examine instant publication, because many media

organizations rely heavily on editors, who act as gatekeepers and who modulate emotional material when writers have difficulty maintaining rational viewpoints. Because the Web is a space where anyone can publish and publish quickly, it is easy for accuracy to be devalued.

While mainstream media concentrate on blogs' journalistic influences, the majority of bloggers are teenagers. In fact, 90% of bloggers are between the ages of 13 and 29 (Nussbaum, 2004). *The New York Times* found that teenagers spread gossip, revealed romantic mishaps, and thought their parents were stupid. The article also agreed with this study that the linked journals form a community, "an unchecked experiment in silent group therapy—a hive mind in which everyone commiserates about how it feels to be an outsider, in perfect choral unison" (Nussbaum, 2004, 34). As the ritual of conversation was touched on in this study, a more in-depth study on readers' comments could provide insight into the community function of Weblogs such as *The New York Times* snapshot of teenagers' personal online journals.

Finally, information is being injected into society by blogs, and the information is spreading like a virus from one blog to another. Just as teenagers spread gossip on their blogs, an amateur journalist such as Russ Kick, is able to spread information to a traditional news organization and create his own mass audience of 4 million. Viral journalism is becoming a trend and more scholarship on how information is disbursed as needed. A comparison of journalistic blogs and traditional media would be especially interesting.

Conclusion

This paper provides a snapshot of personal Weblog narratives. The fascination with putting one's life story out to the masses is becoming a way for people to understand one another. Because readers can take away a slice of a person's everyday traditions, the Internet has proven to be a vital tool for people to share their rituals. In fact, blogs have become the new

gathering place similar to the work place water cooler. Researchers need to take notice that Weblogs are a haven for narratives that reveal the everyday rituals of the authors and not just possible news stories. The 15 themes, as shown in Table 4, explain that the topics are diverse and with a more extensive study may become endless.

Weblogs with their endless personal stories may become apart of the historical tradition of diary/journal keeping. Weblogs reveal a lot about a person and while reading the blogs one starts to become familiar with the author. Just as Mallon and Fothergill consider Pepys' diary a historical document, the potential historical data saved from Weblogs of people around the world is infinite. While Pepys wrote his diary with pen and paper that endured over centuries, technology is sometimes not as reliable. If one traditional diary is destroyed, only one is destroyed. Blogs are more volatile because thousands of blogs may be stored on one computer network and, if one computer network crashes, those thousands of Weblogs may be deleted and lost forever. By taking the necessary precautions of preserving this data, blogs will have the chance to provide the future with a rich portrait of the early 21st century.

Finally, the world needs more narratives that are thoughtful (Corder, 1985) and Weblogging provides a forum to do just that. While people continue to write traditional diaries, the option that one has writing a Weblog is the potential to achieve the ritual of storytelling to a mass audience. In closing, while this study found that personal blogs are a continuing tradition of diaries, they are similar in many ways, but profoundly different because of interactivity. As Rhodes noted, Weblogs are “nothing new, they’re not changing the world with their content... but they are a form of self expression and community which others enjoy reading” (2002, p.103).

REFERENCE LIST

- Allan, S. (2002). Reweaving the Internet: Online news of September 11. In B. Zeltizer & S. Allan (Eds.), *Journalism after September 11* (pp. 119-140). London: Routledge.
- Aristotle. (1991). *The art of rhetoric* (H.C. Lawson-Tancred, Trans). London: Penguin Books.
- Autrey, K. (1991). Toward a rhetoric of journal writing. *Rhetoric Review*, 10, 74-90.
- Barthes, R. & Duisit, L. (1975). *An introduction to the structural analysis of narrative*. *New Literary History*, 6, 237-272.
- Berger, A. A. (1997). *Narratives in popular culture, media and everyday life*. London: Sage Publications.
- Berland, J. (2000). Cultural technologies and the “evolution” of technological cultures In A. Herman & T. Swiss (Eds.), *The World Wide Web and Contemporary Cultural Theory* (pp. 171-182). New York: Routledge.
- Birnie, S.A. & Horvath, P. (2002). *Psychological predictors of Internet social communication*. Retrived on December 23, 2004 <http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol7/issue4/horvath.html>.
- Blood, R. (2002). Introduction. In R. Blood (Ed.), *We've got blog* (pp. xi-xiii). Cambridge: Perseus Publishing.
- Blood, R. (2002). Weblogs: A history and perspective. In R. Blood (Ed.), *We've got Blog* (pp. 7-16). Cambridge: Perseus Publishing.
- Bruner, E.M. (1986). Ethnography as narrative. In Victor W. Turner & Edward M. Bruner (Eds.), *The anthropology of experience* (pp. 139-155). Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Bruner, E. M. (1986). Experience and its expressions. In Victor W. Turner & Edward M. Bruner (Eds.), *The anthropology of experience* (pp. 3-30). Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Bulmer, M. (1979). Concepts in the analysis of qualitative data. *Sociological Review*, 27, 651-677.
- Carey, J.W. (1992). *Communication as culture*. New York: Routledge.

- Chatman, S. (1975). Towards a theory of narrative. *New Literary History*, 6, 295-318.
- Conhaim, W.W. (2003). Personal journals: New uses for an age-old practice. *Information Today*, 20, 27-29.
- Corder, J. W. (1985). Argument as emergence, rhetoric as love. *Rhetoric Review*, 4, 16-32.
- Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the Internet*. New York: Cambridge.
- Dicken-Garcia, H. (1998). The Internet and continuing historical discourse. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75, 19-27.
- Dreher, R. (2004, June 23). Journalism's new wave puts you in the publisher's chair. *The Dallas Morning News*. p.18A.
- Fisher, W.R. (1999). Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument. In John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit and Sally Caudill (Eds.), *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory* (pp. 265-287). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Fothergill, R.A. (1974). *Private chronicles*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Foss, S.K., Foss, K.A. & Trapp, R. (1991). *Contemporary perspectives on rhetoric*. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Gannett, C. (1992). *Gender and the journal: Diaries and academic discourse*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Glaser, M. (2003). Feeling misquoted? Weblogs, transcripts let the reader decide. *Online Journalism Review*. Retrieved June 10, 2003 from <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/glaser/1054844800.php>.
- Glaser, M. (2003). Media critics rave (and kvetch) about the Internet's impact. *Online Journalism Review*. Retrieved July 3, 2004 from <http://www.ojr.org>.
- Grabill, J.T. (2003). Community computing and citizen productivity. *Computers and Composition*, 20, 131-150.
- Graybeal, A., Sexton, J.D. & Pennebaker, J.W. (2002). The role of story-making in disclosure writing: The psychometrics of narrative. *Psychology and Health*, 17, 571-581.
- Grossman, L. (2004). Meet joe blog. *Time*, 25, 65-66, 69-70.

- Gurak, L. (1996). The Rhetorical Dynamics of a Community Protest in Cyberspace: What Happened with Lotus MarketPlace. In S.C. Herring (Ed.), *Computer-Mediated Communication* (pp. 265-277). Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co.
- Hall, J. (2001). *Online journalism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Harrison, K. (2003). Rhetorical rehearsals: The construction of ethos in confederate women's civil war diaries. *Rhetoric Review*, 22, 243-263.
- Heath, R. L. & Bryant, J. (2000). *Human communication theory and research*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Herring, S. (1994). *Gender differences in computer-mediated communication: Bringing familiar baggage to the new frontier*. Retrieved August 12, 2003 from <http://www.cpsr.org/cpsr/gender/herring.txt>.
- Herring, S. (2001). Computer-mediated discourse. In Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen & Heidi E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 612-634). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing..
- Herring, S. (2003). *Computer-mediated discourse analysis: An approach to researching online behavior*. Retrieved August 12, 2003 from <http://ella.slis.indiana.edu/~herring/cmda.html>.
- Herring, S. (2004). Slouching toward the ordinary: Current trends in computer-mediated communication. *New Media & Society*, 1, 26-36.
- Hodder, I. (1993). The narrative and rhetoric of material culture sequences. *World Archaeology*, 25, 268-282.
- Johnson, A. (2001). *Leaving a trace*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Joinson, A.N. (2003). *Understanding the psychology of Internet behavior*. New York: Palgrave.
- Jones, S. (2000). The bias of the Web. In A. Herman & T. Swiss (Eds.), *The world wide Web and contemporary cultural theory* (pp. 171-182). New York: Routledge.
- Jovchelovitch, S. & Bauer, M.W. (2000). Narrative Interviewing. In M.W. Bauer & G. Gaskell (Eds.), *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound* (pp. 57-74). London: Sage Publications.

- Kuhn-Osius, K.E. (1981). Making loose ends meet: Private journals in the public realm. *The German Quarterly*, 54, 166-176.
- Kitzman, A. (2003). That different place: Documenting the self within online environments. *Biography*, 26, 48-65.
- Lasica, J.D. (2002). Weblogs: A new source of news. *Online Journalism Review*. Retrieved August 4, 2003 from <http://www.ojr.org/>.
- Lasswell, H. (1948). The structure and function of communication in society. In L. Bryson (Ed.), *The communication of ideas* (pp. 32-51). New York: Harper.
- Langfield, A. (2002). Democratizing journalism. *Online Journalism Review*. Retrieved August 15, 2003 from <http://www.ojr.org/>.
- Lau, I. Y., Chiu, C. & Lee, S. (2001). Communication and shared reality implications for the psychological foundations of culture. *Social Cognition*, 19, 350-371.
- Leach, Joan. (2002) Rhetorical analysis. In M.W. Bauer and G. Gaskell (Eds.), *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound* (pp. 207-226). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Lee, E.J. & Nass, C. (2002). Experimental tests of normative group influence and representation effects in computer-mediated communication. *Human Communication Research*, 28, 349-381.
- Lenert, E.M. (1998). A communication theory perspective on telecommunications policy. *Journal of Communication*, 48, 3-23.
- Lewin, B.A. & Donner, Y. (2002). Communication in Internet message boards. *English Today*, 18, 22-37.
- Lin, C. A. (2002). Perceived gratifications of online media service use among potential users. *Telematics and Infomatics*, 19, 3-19.
- Lowenstein, S. (1987). A brief history of Journal keeping. In T. Fulwiler (Ed.), *The journal book* (pp. 87-97). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- Lull, J. (1995). *Media, communication, culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mallon, T. (1984). *A book of one's own: People and their diaries*. New York: Ticknor & Fields.
- McKee, H. (2002). "Your views showed true ignorance!!!": (Mis) communication in an online interracial discussion forum. *Computers and Composition*, 19, 411-434.

- McKenna, K.Y.A. & Bargh, J.A. (2000). Plan 9 from cyberspace: The implications of the internet for personality and social psychology. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4, 57-75.
- McMillan, S.J. (2002). A four-part model of cyber-interactivity. *New Media & Society*, 4, 271-291.
- McNeill, L. (2003). Teaching an old genre new tricks: The diary on the internet. *Biography*, 26, 24-47.
- Mernit, S. (2003). Kevin sites and the blogging controversy. *Online Journalism Review*. Retrieved June 1, 2003 from <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/workplace/p1049381758>
- Morahan, J. & Schumacher, P. (2003). Loneliness and social uses of the Internet. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 16, 13-29.
- Nussbaum, E. (2004, January 11). My so called blog. *The New York Times Magazine*. pp. 32-37.
- Ochs, E. & Capps, L. (1996). Narrating the self. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 25, 19-43.
- Perseus Development Corporation. (2003). *The blogging iceberg*. Retrieved June 7, 2004 from <http://perseusdevelopment.com>
- Pew Internet and American Life Project. (2003). The Internet and the Iraq war: How online Americans have used the Internet to learn war news, understand events and promote their views. Retrieved April 6, 2003 from <http://www.pewinternet.org/>
- Pew Internet and American Life Project. (2003). America's online pursuits: The changing picture of who's online and what they do. Retrieved June 7, 2004 from <http://www.pewinternet.org>
- Pew Internet and American Life Project. (2004). *Content creation online*. Retrieved June 7, 2004 from <http://www.pewinternet.org/>
- Poster, M. (2001). *What's the matter with the Internet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Pratkanis, A.R & Aronson, E. (1992). *The age of propaganda*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company.
- Primoratz, I. (2002). Patriotism: A deflationary view. *The Philosophical Forum*, 4, 443-458.

- Rainer, T. (1978). *The new diary*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc.
- Rhodes, J.S. (2002). In the trenches with a Weblog pioneer. In R. Blood, (Ed.), *We've got blog*. (pp. 99-103). Cambridge: Perseus Publishing.
- Richardson, L. (1990). Narrative and Sociology. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 19, 116-135.
- Rosenberg, R.S. (1997). *The Social impact of computers*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Ruggiero, T. (2000). Uses and gratifications theory in the 21st century. *Mass Communication and Society*, 3, 3-37.
- Schiffrin, D. (1994). *Approaches to discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Schramm, W. (1954). How communication works. In W. Schramm (Ed.), *The process and effects of mass communication* (pp. 3-26). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Shields, R. (2000). Hypertext links: The ethic of the index and its space-time effects. In A. Herman & T. Swiss (Eds.), *The world wide Web and contemporary cultural theory* (pp.145-160). New York: Routledge.
- Sinor, J. (2002). Reading the ordinary diary. *Rhetoric Review*, 21, 123-149.
- Singer, J.B. (1998). Online journalists: Foundations for research into their changing roles. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. Retrieved July 3, 2004 from <http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol4/issue1/singer2.html>.
- Stempel, G.H. & Stewart, R.K. (2000). The Internet provides both opportunities and challenges for mass communication researchers. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77, 541-548.
- Tanner, E. (2001). Chilean conversations: Internet forum participants debate Augusto Pinochet's detention. *Journal of Communication*, 51, 383-403.
- Tidwell, L.C. & Walther, J.B. (2002). Computer-mediated communication effects on disclosure, impressions, and interpersonal evaluations: Getting to know one another a bit at a time. *Human Communication Research*, 28, 317-348.
- Turkle, S. (1984). *The second self: Computers and the human spirit*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Watson, K.A. (1973). A rhetorical and sociolinguistic model for the analysis of narrative. *American Anthropologist*, 75, 243-264.