

BLOGS AND WIKIS

Both blogs and wikis allow users to create/add content to web pages through a browser. Both can be set up for multiple users, e.g., class blogs. The most apparent distinction between the two is organization: blogs are organized chronologically; wiki organization is non-linear.

Blogs (and some wikis) generate RSS feeds. If the blog or wiki platform allows RSS enclosures, you can use it to distribute podcasts as well as text. (If not, you can experiment with Feedburner (<http://www.feedburner.com/fb/a/home>)). Most blogs and wikis allow multimedia content.

Choosing Blog and Wiki Software or Services

If you have technical help available, you/your school may prefer to download and install any of the freely available blog and wiki platforms. One advantage: you can hide your school's blogs and wikis from the outside world. Whether you are choosing software for your school or deciding which of the many services (Blogger, WordPress, Edublogs, Wikispaces, etc.) to use, here are some things to consider:

- Is it easy to control participation in the (class) blog or wiki?
- Is there good spam control?
- What are the usage limits, e.g., amount of space consumed, types of uploads permitted?
- What are the privacy controls? Do they match your needs for privacy?

Examples of Blogs

To get an idea of what blogs are like, look for blogs on a topic/in a language you're interested in. There are many ways to search for interesting blogs; here are three:

- Google's Blog search (<http://blogsearch.google.com/>)
- Blog Catalog (<http://www.blogcatalog.com/>)
- Bloglines (<http://www.bloglines.com/>)

The University of Richmond uses blojsom software for its class blogs. An example started this semester is the "German Film in Context" blog

(<http://keillor.richmond.edu/blojsom/blog/germanfilm/>). You'll notice that some of the entries have no text; these students have uploaded .mp3 files to create a podcast that can be heard by subscribing to keillor.richmond.edu/blojsom/blog/germanfilm?flavor=rss2. Although this blog is in English, we chose the blojsom software because it supports multilingual computing; ask Sharon about the FL blogs.

Creating a Blog

There are a number of platforms and services to create blogs. For teachers and students, one of the best is Edublogs (<http://edublogs.org/>). Note that multi-user blogs require payment of a fee. For group/multi-user blogs you might want to explore WordPress (<http://wordpress.com/>).

- Visit the Edublogs and WordPress sites to compare features.

Wikis

Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>) is the most famous example. It runs on MediaWiki, which is available for anyone to use. An easy-to-install flat-file (no database required) wiki is PMWiki (<http://www.pmwiki.org/>); see what it looks like by exploring its site.

Many educators do not have the technical support to install and manage their own wiki software. A variety of services exist to host wikis. For teachers and students, the Edublogs people have created Wikispaces (<http://www.wikispaces.com/>). For K-12 teachers, the Wikispaces Plus (<http://www.wikispaces.com/site/for/teachers100K>) service is now free.

TiddlyWiki (<http://www.tiddlywiki.com/>) is a "guerrilla wiki" application; it exists as only one web page that can be stored on a flash drive and moved from computer to computer. The disadvantage, of course, is that it is not public and multi-user; however, it could be used in a classroom situation.

- Think of a topic that would lend itself to collaborative web-building.
- Go to WikiSpaces and start a wiki on that topic.