



To **BLOG** or not to **BLOG**

By David Alexander

Welcome to Geek Speak, a column designed to keep cultural institutions in the know on the latest technologies. The tech world moves at a dizzying pace and we hope to make it a little clearer for those in the museum world. We will review hardware and software, make the business and technology of web pages a little clearer and hopefully make the internet a more interesting place for you to roam. If you have suggestions for future topics, please email them to zeroone@zeroonedesign.com

What is a blog?

- a) a drink containing beer and an egg
- b) how you feel after drinking anything containing a beer and an egg
- c) a web log or journal

If you chose C – you are absolutely correct. Jump up and down and consider yourself web savvy.

A blog, short for web log, is a website that is frequently updated and contains diary entries usually arranged in a revised chronological order. Anyone with a connection to the Internet can publish their own blog, thus there are a multitude of blogs ranging in quality and content. Many blogs offer their readers the opportunity to comment on entries, creating discussion and community on their blogs.

Blogs are a new tool in the technological scene. The first blog was uploaded in 1994 and since then the number of blogs has expanded rapidly and it is estimated that there are between 4 and 5 million blogs active. Weblogs are primarily composed of text, however changes in internet access and bandwidth has created an opportunity for experimentation with sound, images, and video and has resulted in related genres such as photoblogs, videoblogs, and audioblogs.

A few notable blogs to check out:

Canada's Prime Minister blogs

http://www.paulmartintimes.ca/personal-paul/blogs_e.asp
Yes, Paul Martin blogs, though he is a little less than regular in his entries.

The Baghdad blogger

http://dear_raed.blogspot.com/
The Baghdad blogger blogged during the Iraq war and provided a glimpse of what civilians in Iraq experienced.

CBC's resident tech expert Todd Maffin

<http://vancouver.cbc.ca/nerd/>

Why are blogs important to museums and galleries? One way to ensure visitors come back to a web site is to create a community. Some means of allowing the visitor to interact with the website and at a larger level with the institution itself. A blog creates this sense of interaction, allowing visitors to post their own comments in response to the blog entries. As well, a blog authored by a staff member or volunteer can offer an insiders view of an institution and entice a visitor to visit the brick and mortar. Finally, blogs are an excellent way to reach a younger demographic. A recent study from the University of Maryland shows that young people are looking to interactive media like internet chats and blogs more and more as their main and often sole source of news and information.

A couple of paragraphs a day and you too can be a blogger.

David Alexander (david@zeroonedesign.com) is a partner in Zero One Design Inc., a multimedia company specializing in the cultural sector and is currently completing a Masters of Arts Degree in Applied Communication. He may or may not be blogging.