

# Class: Blogging Best Practices, 4/25/11

Start time: 6:34 pm

End time: 8:46 pm

## Readings (10 minutes)

[Five Keys to Authenticity](#) (Ryan Sholin)

### **Be Human:**

**Be Honest:** Credibility is crucial and will help you compete in a crowded space

**Be Aware:** Expertise in a niche will set you apart; be ahead of the curve, don't be late to the online party in terms of joining the conversation. Offer a unique insight, and part of that is paying attention to what others are saying and identify where missing gaps are (and try to fill them). A negotiation between publishing quickly and getting your fact straight. (Do you have the bandwidth and stamina, or publish less frequent but well-thought-out posts). Do what you do best and link to the rest (Jeff Jarvis). Focus on your original analysis, reporting etc.

**Be Everywhere:** Try an RSS feed (really simple syndication) to stay on top of latest news in your beat. RSS is a protocol for syndicating content across the WEB, an XML-based protocol (much like newspapers use to submit to newswires). More B2C where consumers can subscribe to info from publishes. Also try Google Reader, which allows you to subscribe to RSS feeds from as many sites as you want. Google reader will manage and index all the latest news for you, so you don't have visit each source. You curate your sources of info.

### **Show Your Work:**

[The art of the link roundup](#) (Matt Thompson)

Examples:

- <http://fort-greene.thelocal.nytimes.com/2011/04/25/the-day-a-fundraiser-and-good-pizza/>
- <http://www.pharmalot.com/2010/08/pharmalot-pharmalittle-good-morning-284/>
- <http://www.niemanlab.org/2011/04/links-on-twitter-a-new-head-for-mits-media-lab-a-kickstarter-magazine-a-tale-of-two-timeses/>
- <http://www.niemanlab.org/2011/04/popular-on-twitter-news-me-stage-1-measuring-accuracy-in-journalism-and-the-effects-of-amazons-server-problem/>

[The People Formerly Known as the Audience](#) (Jay Rosen)

Recommendation: <http://pressthink.org/2011/03/the-psychology-of-bloggers-vs-journalists-my-talk-at-south-by-southwest/>

## Term review (10 minutes)

## RSS

- Stands for: Really Simple Syndication
- Definition: a family of [web feed](#) formats used to publish frequently updated works—such as [blog](#) entries, news headlines, audio, and video—in a standardized format.
- Tools: [Google Reader](#), [Instapaper](#). You can do an rss feed from search.twitter.com, and set up RSS feed from that search. (copy link location, go to google reader, and subscribe)

## HTML

- Stands for: Hyper Text Mark-up Language
- Definition: A mark-up language with its origins in print; allows you to mark up content and give structure to content on the Web. The real world metaphor, if a building was content, with HTML or CSS, all the materials would be a pile sans structure or form.

## CSS

- Stands for: Cascading Style Sheet(s)
- Definition: site's stylebook or design element

## CMS

- Stands for: content management system
- Definition: your data is stored in a different place

## PHP programming language

Question: When starting out, how often should you update your blog ?

Answer (DB): On average, shoot for 700 words three times a week. Plan to spend about two hours on each entry. If your goal is to ultimately attract advertisers, then more content = more traffic = more advertising.

## **Blogging platforms: WordPress and other tools (10 minutes)**

### Advantages to WordPress

- Open source - Run the software on your own server. 10% of sites are on WP (NYT blogs are wordpress; neiman lab; jschool; hacks & hackers; chris [dixon.org](http://dixon.org) etc)
- User friendly
- Strong community: many people contribute themes and plug-ins (Themes allow you to change the styling, changing a theme is as easy as clicking a button.
- Personalization with themes (design of your blog) - another
  - see [wordpress.org/extend/themes](http://wordpress.org/extend/themes)
  - <http://www.woothemes.com/themes/free/>
- One investment you may make in month 3 or 4 is a premium theme, such as Woo Themes (although they offer FREE themes, you can also buy a membership, and have access to all Woo Themes' premium websites.) Elegant Themes is another good source

- of premium themes. (CR)
- Regularly updated with new features
- Extend functionality with plugins

Question: What is a masthead

Answer (DB): Your blog's "header." Masthead is more of a print term. The digital version is called a "header."

If you want a blog video, use a service like Vimeo or Youtube. Vimeo has a free version, but the pro version (\$60 a year) is better. DB prefers Vimeo to Youtube.

Wysiwyg = What you see is what you get.

Disadvantages to WordPress

- If you're self-hosting, you're responsible for making sure your site is up. With great power comes great responsibility.
- Amount of design flexibility often depends on the theme.

What you should think about when you're looking at tools

- Custom domain (e.g. danielbachhuber.com)
- Ease of use
- Writing interface
- Data portability
- Publishing from mobile if you need
- Extensibility
- Support
- Performance/reliability

WordPress hosts to consider

- [wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com)
- [Page.ly](http://Page.ly)
- [WebFaction](http://WebFaction)

Other tools you might consider

- Tumblr
- Posterous
- Movable Type

## **Orientation to WordPress core concepts and the admin (40 minutes)**

### **Creating a post or a page**

Why you should double-check your slug: <http://www.niemanlab.org/2011/04/how-url-spoofing-can-put-libelous-words-into-news-orgs-mouths/>

## Themes

[WordPress.org themes](#)

[WooThemes free themes](#)

## Plugins

[Plugins for Publishers, April 2011 edition](#)

## Users

## Settings

## Types of blogging (40 minutes)

### Personal

- Why:
  - Personal, permanent space on the internet
  - Share content with friends and family
  - Influence others within your industry
- Examples:
  - [Chris Dixon](#) -
  - [Dave Winer](#) -
  - [Andrew Spittle](#)
- Characteristics:

### One-person publication

- Why:
- Examples:
  - [Daring Fireball](#) -
  - [Kottke.org](#) -
- Characteristics:

### Multi-person “new media” publication

- Why:

- Examples:
  - [Gawker](#) -
  - [TechCrunch](#) -
  - [The Awl](#) -
- Characteristics:

#### Multi-person “old media” publication

- Why:
- Examples:
  - [Babbage](#) (The Economist)
  - [Lens](#) (The New York Times)
- Characteristics:

#### Corporate blogs

- Why:
- Examples:
  - [Mint.com](#) - good example of a company blog; they produce original content to drive traffic, not just promotional (promotional content is only about 10 percent of what they publish. Build trust to convince readers to try your product.
  - [Signal vs. Noise](#) by 37signals -
- Characteristics:
- Question for next week: In Corporate blogs, can we address characteristics for fields that are not so “corporate” such as fashion blog for an e-commerce site?

#### Team blogs

- Why:
- Examples:
  -
- Characteristics:

## Legal, copyright and community best practices (10 minutes)

#### Daniel’s best practices

1. Link as you would want to be linked
2. Be nice
3. Use formatting properly
4. Do use the standard font from your website
5. Don’t copy and paste from Microsoft Word without using the special tool

From [Interactive 2’s syllabus](#):

Photo policy: Do not “lift” or “borrow” images from other web sites for use on your web site or

blog without credit or “courtesy of” text. Permission must be provided by creator of the content for any image to be used, unless it is being used for “fair use,” purposes such as to comment on the image or because the image itself is part of the news you are reporting. Since such permission is often difficult to obtain, especially on deadline, and “fair use” difficult to define, we strongly recommend that instead you use only those images you have created yourself, or which you have obtained via the AP Photo Bank, or other photo service for which the school has obtained licensing, or which are explicitly labelled as “creative commons” and available for your use. IMPORTANT: This matters, not just as a plagiarism issue, but as a legal copyright issue that could create problems for you in the school or beyond, in the workplace. Apply the old journalism adage: “If in doubt, leave it out!”

### [Top 15 Blogging Best Practices](#) (Laura Lee Walker)

1. **Use a catchy title.** Make the title unique, consider using questions and lists.
2. **Use interesting visuals.** Include an image or video in your blog. This will get people’s attention and help them better understand the content of your blog.
3. **Include links.** Links add depth and credibility to your articles and allow you to show a little ‘link love’.
4. Use bullets, *italics*, and **bold font**. This makes for an easier read. Using bold font allows the reader to quickly scan your post.
5. **Let your personality come through.** This is what makes your blog unique.
7. Reference your articles. If you use other people’s work, include a reference or link to their article.
10. **Be bold.** This might take the form of being outrageous or controversial.
12. **Respond to comments as soon as possible.** Treat your reader like a friend. If your friend calls you and leaves a message, do you wait days to respond?
13. **Make your blog post easy to share.** This may include adding widgets such as Tweet, Reddit, Delicious, Stumble Upon, etc.
14. **Post frequently.** This helps keep your blog fresh and entices search engines to index you more often.

### [Finding free images to use](#) (Tech@CUNYJ)

## Topics for next week

How to install themes from woocommerce to wordpress?

Maybe go through google analytics

Where to put metatags and descriptions for SEO and alt text for photos?

In Corporate blogs, can we address characteristics for fields that are not so “corporate” such as fashion blog for an e-commerce site?

Please post a couple educational tools on the web for developing the basics of HTML

Also, please post, if you know any, a link or two that walks you through wordpress, i.e. an easy-to-use manual or instructions