

Blogging

Eneng Faridah takes a look at the Malaysian blogging community.

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A blog (a portmanteau of web log) is a website where entries are written in chronological order and commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. “Blog” can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs.

Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art (artlog), photographs (photoblog), sketchblog, videos (vlog), music (MP3 blog), audio (podcasting) and are part of a wider network of social media. Micro-blogging is another type of blogging which consists of blogs with very short posts.

As of September 2007, blog search engine Technorati was tracking more than 106 million blogs.

–Wikipedia.org–

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When someone decides to look for some information on the Internet, other than search engines and sites like Wikipedia, one of the best places to get detailed information usually turns out to be a blog run by a lone individual.

There is so much information on the Internet that it is impossible for a person to sieve through everything to find something of interest. Even with search engines like Yahoo! and Google, the credibility and quality of the content is never guaranteed. This is especially true when Weblogs come into the picture. But good weblogs run by people passionate about the subject they are blogging about can match just about any other source of information on the Internet.

Commonly known as a blog, it is basically a list of Website links accompanied by personal commentary and even editorial remarks on any given

topic. Blogs may be based on a certain theme or a collection of ‘random’ thoughts, and is often operated by an individual who compiles it chronologically.

Good blogs are updated frequently with pointers to interesting events, pages, stories and happenings. Implementing the ‘First In – First Out’ principle, new material piles on top of the page while older items is pushed further down.

With no editor or organisation observing the creator through a glass ceiling, blogs tend to be uncensored and more daring in opinions. Sometimes, without a boss breathing down one’s neck, a lack of discipline can lead to a blog which is sloppy, lacking in focus and not updated! Nevertheless, by providing up-to-the-minute archived records blogs provide listings of specific entries that are more or less assured to be what the reader is looking for.

Anyone who relies on the Internet for their daily dosage of information is

bound to feel a natural affinity to blogs. Selecting, criticising, and illuminating the best or the worst of the Internet in a particular area is an activity that many of us already do on a daily basis. Blogs make one’s life much easier in the sense that they provide a complete catalogue of relevant information and with the creator’s comments and opinions to go with it to boot.

On the reverse side, some might say that since blogs are too accessible and are not monitored by any professional body, the trend may cause a flood of amateur commentators who think they have something important to say. This may or may not be true but no matter what, a blog is more fleshed out than a simple link list. It can also be a window into the mind and daily life of its creator and is an avenue of individual expression.

History

If you look at how the Internet really started to catch on, it was really a group of ‘geeks’ who liked to get in



touch with other people to inform them of other geeky stuff such as the development of technology and computer games. They started bulletin boards and forums where they would list an issue to discuss and new information would be added on in the form of threads.

Slowly, this evolved into websites or even personal homepages. If you recall, many websites and homepages would have sections called 'News' where they would list down the latest happenings in their lives or interests. The webmasters would update this section regularly so people would know what they were up to.

Again, the natural evolution took place and as these 'News' sections became a big and popular part of the entire website, it began to take the spotlight. Webmasters would put the section at the front of the websites and started updating more in chronological form. As current news is added, the older ones drop lower. All this was done by manually updating the components of the website.

With a bit more evolution everything became so much simpler with specific tools for blogging being developed. Now we have a lot of browser-based software such as Blogger.com, Wordpress.com, LiveJournal.com that allow even the non-techies to blog. And hence we see today's blogs. Now, it is not just

texts, these days blogs have become a breeding place for multimedia. They incorporate photographs, videos and audio and because they are so user-friendly, they are no longer just for geeks!

So really, blogs started out as online journals, be it for the individual, organisations or groups of people. However, its role has now started to become increasingly mainstream. It is fast becoming a tool for expression, not only for the individual, but for different kinds of people like journalists, politicians, corporations, governments, artists; well, basically everyone and anyone who has got an opinion about anything.

As of 2007, according to Technorati (an Internet search engine specifically for blogs), there are now well over 100 million blogs in existence all around the world, and the numbers are still growing fast. It will surely be the mainstream mass media of the near future.

The local front

Malaysia has not been left out of the blogging phenomenon. By some accounts, there are tens of thousands of blogs run by Malaysians. What are the most famous blogs in Malaysia? The answer you would get right now would be Jeff Ooi's Screenshots and Rocky's Rockybru and the reason is simple. Both are now in the midst of

a highly publicised court case with The New Straits Times Press (NSTP). NSTP is currently suing both bloggers for defamation with both bloggers responding with motions for the suits to be struck out.

Anything that is highly politicised will always garner some attention, be it with the public or with the authorities. It comes as no surprise then that the two bloggers who blog about news and some controversial issues to garner this sort of attention. However, this is the first time a mainstream media organisation is taking individuals to court.

It is important to remember that blogs published on the Internet, just like any other medium, are still subject to the law. Just because anyone can start a blog does not mean that anyone can just say anything they want.

The law, including defamation (be it libel, in the case of text, or slander, in the form of speech – video or audio), still applies. This is because when you publish or webcast something on the Internet, the public is given access to it. Your blog may be a personal blog, but it can be read by all, around the world. And if this is the case, you have the same responsibility as journalists and media professionals towards the public.

Blogs have had impact all around the world. Blogs have been used to bring about social change and highlight injustice. In countries like the United States of America and the United Kingdom, good blogs are taken seriously. They are seen as empowering the public and even governments are embracing it. Office holders have blogs just so they can keep in touch with their constituency.

Malaysians too are embracing blogging with vigour. Increasingly, they have become an accepted feature of the Malaysian media scene and some have become credible sources of news. The government has always welcomed opinions and even criticism and blogs are just about the best media to do that in an electronic age.

But all said and done, blogs are really not just about empowering the public on politics and social issues.



Kenny Sia
KennySia.com

“Blogs have had impact all around the world. Blogs have been used to bring about social change and highlight injustice”

There are many blogs out there that cover a myriad of other subjects and issues. Remember, blogs really originated and evolved from forums and bulletin boards which people used to discuss and exchange information.

There are blogs related to entertainment, humour, film, literature, gardening, food, fishing, sports, automobiles, comics, dancing, music, travelling, photography, art and design, language, technology, education, networking, boating, hiking, swimming, extreme sports, e-commerce, animals, pets, whales, dogs, cats, dolphins... et cetera and et cetera. You get the drift.

And some of these blogs are actually very popular in Malaysia. One of the more visited ones is PaulTan.org, which is a blog that is all about cars. The blogger Paul Tan is a huge car enthusiast and he discusses and reviews different cars, offers automotive advice, and also highlights



Paul Tan
paultan.org

second hand cars that are up for sale. He has a large following and now car companies are offering him cars for free to review because it would be niche publicity for them.

Then we have KennySia.com, which is all about comedy and clowning around. Kenny Sia seems to have a knack of making smart remarks and comments about everything and many visitors go to his side just to get a kick (and laugh) out of his different entries everyday. For example, he has blogged about why he feels girls aren't allowed to ask for a guy's phone number, what will happen if Vietnamese people spoke Hokkien, and just about anything absurd or random.

There are also the publicity seekers such as Fireangelism.com. Fireangel is a girl who fiercely craves attention. The term 'camwhoring' which has become synonymous with blogs like Fireangelism is an apt description of her blogging style. Although it may sound vulgar, it really isn't, it simply refers to individuals who like to post pictures and videos of themselves and their daily lives for others to see. Everything is in fun and jest. She likes to write about her life, gripe about things that irritate her and post pictures and videos of herself. People enjoy this harmless form of voyeurism and they keep coming back for more.

Muzaffar who is blogging under the name of [sultanmuzaffar](http://sultanmuzaffar.blogspot.com)



Fireangel
Fireangelism.com

(sultanmuzaffar.blogspot.com) has been blogging for five years on the local entertainment scene. His blog has become well known as an excellent site to catch up on local movies, TV series and singers. Muzaffar blogs in Malay and the site is very heavy on content.

Daphne Ling, on the other hand, is a young girl that uses her blog as a platform to raise consciousness on her favourite passion which is volunteerism. She blogs at <http://daphneling.blogspot.com> about her visits to hospitals where she volunteers time with terminally ill children and also her volunteer work with abandoned children. Daphne has successfully used her blog to raise funds for families and individuals



1. Wiley Chin
ximnet.com.my/thelab/blog

2. Kugan Kathegesen
malaysianwireless.com

3. Daphne Ling
<http://daphneling.blogspot.com>



that are in need of medical care and support.

There are a lot of local tech bloggers too. Some specialize on hardware and others on applications. The local wireless industry is the focus of the blog located at malaysianwireless.com. This blog is maintained by K. Kugan, a college student studying telecommunications. The blog picks up all the happenings in the mobile and broadband sectors. From his blog, it's evident that telecommunications is his passion.

Corporate blogging is fast picking up in Malaysia too. One of the first would have to be Wiley Chin, CEO of Ximnet Malaysia, an IT company (www.ximnet.com.my/thelab/blog). He feels that corporate blogging actually provides transparency into the culture and practices of an organisation. It also gives a human aspect to the corporate world and when this connection is established with the people, they will want to get to know your organisation better.

There are also many bloggers who use their blogs for networking and building relationships. Many students who further their studies abroad blog to help their friends and families keep up to date and in touch with their lives. This is also the same for working expatriates who live far away from their home countries.

So yes, there is a wide range of diversity when it comes to blogs.

Start blogging

How is all that for a sales pitch? If you are interested, there are many automated tools and scripts that you can use to create your own blog. These programs help to ease the gathering, organizing, and publishing of your blog.

One of the more popular sites is Blogger.Com (www.blogger.com), which gives you complete control of the look of your blog. Its features enables you to blog any website that you happen to be viewing by right clicking on an icon, and the title of the Website and its URL address are automatically added to your update form. You can also search and review news headlines and topics to select items that you wish to capture and edit.

GrokSoup (www.groksoup.com) is another such site. At GrokSoup, there are discussion groups for every article, automatic archiving, the ability to load multiple news sites, and mailing lists.

Pitas.Com (www.pitas.com) is yet another popular blog creation and

hosting site. The software is easy to use and the site offers a choice of default design templates. The adventurous designers can also create his or her own custom look.

LiveJournal.Com (www.livejournal.com) is another site that provides the blogger with tools that help with gathering and editing blog entries. One nice feature of LiveJournal.Com is the ability to integrate your blog with your own Website.

Blogs can be made more interesting by incorporating interactive features. Providing commentary and a context for the stories or links can be very useful to your readers, but with the right software, your readers can participate by subscribing to your blog. They can then receive updates through email alerts, and even take part in online discussions and chats. They can also visit the blog at anytime and search the archives or, using the calendar, view articles by date.

So, blog away! my

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