

UNFASHIONABLY LATE



Why Every
Book About Blogging
Written Before 2009 Is
Already Obsolete*

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* (Except for this one. I give this one three weeks.)

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UNFASHIONABLY LATE

Why Every Book About Blogging Written Before 2009 Is Already Obsolete

I've noticed a sad phenomenon among people who blog. They have a certain tendency to be frantic. And I notice among people who are thinking about blogging, that they can get a little frantic as well. Just not as frantic as they'll get after they actually start to blog.

I'm here to help. Before I begin, though, whichever of these camps you're in, or even if you're just an observer, I make this one request.

Breathe.

Breathe some more.

Breathing is good.

Aahhh! So nice, just to breathe...

Parts of what I'll say here may be upsetting. So, in order to forestall franticness, I have done two things. First, I have started us off with some breathing. Second, I have taken what I am about to write out from among my blog drafts and turned it into this little e-book, which you can print out and carry away from your desk, and read over a cup of tea in your most comfortable chair. Consistent with this intention, I have refrained from putting any links in the body of this book, so that you won't be tempted to read it online and follow links, and flip back and forth between the book's links and the things linked to, and become frantic. I will post all the links on my blog, so that if you're really motivated, you can go there and find all the sources I quote.

Now. Got your breath? Got your tea? Got your highlighter?

Let's begin.



Is blogging worthwhile? It depends on how old blogging is on the day you ask the question.

Should you blog? Will it build your business? Will it help you win friends and influence people? Will it bring you fame, fortune, and fun?

Are these even the right questions? Or would we be better off to ask not just about the benefits, but about the price as well? Is blogging worth the time it takes? And what are its other costs?

Dee Rambeau, a successful blogger, has asked himself these questions. He has weighed blogging in the cost-benefit balance, and has found it wanting. He has announced, in what we are meant to assume is his last post on his own blog, that he shall forthwith cease from writing there. After a bit of cuteness about his advanced age, he gets to the meat of his farewell post by saying that his age is fully relevant:

I'm old enough to know that to waste time is a true crime.

He then goes on to suggest that blogging is a waste of time not only for him, but for large numbers of others. He is not so bold as to say it's a waste of time for everybody. And I, for one, am grateful to Dee and to anyone with enough integrity to say, in essence, "it depends." But if you look to Dee's parting post for real guidance as to whether blogging will be worthwhile for you, I'm afraid it's not there.

So, ask me.

I will tell you the answer depends on your profession, your place in your company, your goals, and a lot of variables which other folks will also name. Such as, perhaps, how old you are. What I'll tell you that others won't, it seems, is that the answer also depends very much on how old *blogging* is on the day you ask the question.

In short, I will tell you that if you haven't already been blogging for several months, you've missed the train. But, if you'll bear with me, I'll also tell you the value that blogging still holds, and what can be done to compensate for your tardiness. For many persons who read this, blogging is still well worth doing. Just, do, do be aware of time. The calendar matters.

Rumors of the Blogosphere's Death are Somewhat Exaggerated

One other blogger has been willing to take notice of the calendar in evaluating blogging. She's Amanda Chapel, the keeper of the "Strumpette" blog. In the waning days of July, 2006, she declared that:

Last week, with very little notice or elaboration, the bubble around all the corporate blogging hype broke quietly. Time of Death: Monday, July 17, 9:13 AM. God rest its soul.

Yes, she did say "the bubble around all the corporate blogging hype" and not "blogging." But still, she was sounding a knell for that part of the blogosphere which at the time seemed most hot and happening. It might as well have been the whole blog phenomenon she was urging us to mourn for.

If we were looking to learn from her whether we should undertake blogging for business purposes, her answer looks like a resounding "no." Alas, though, it's not an answer we can trust, since most of her analysis is nonsense. More accurately, she hasn't even done analysis, but simply indulged in name-calling.

Rambeau, on the other hand, has some real points. He conveniently gives four of them in a numbered list, which I will take modest liberties in summarizing:

1. Blogging doesn't benefit his business.
2. Blogging wastes time. "You get sucked in," he says. "...you're doing it to the detriment of other loves and passions"
3. Blogging is too ego-involved; you get seduced into thinking you're important if a few thousand people read your posts. Dee says:

Because of this phenomenon, business bloggers are among the most rabid of the blog class second only to political bloggers. Business bloggers NEED to be measured...ranked somehow. They need to feel that they're speaking to someone out there and making a difference.[...] Business bloggers clamor to share links...clamor to post on one another's blogs to create consensus around ideas and memes...choose sides and shoot barbs at the heathens opposing them.

In other words, blogging makes folks rabid. From which follows:

4. "...blogs polarize people."



In a related post on another blog, he goes farther, and steps, I fear, over the edge of reason in saying that for public corporations, “blogs are useless and irresponsible. No Corporate Communications person in their right mind would allow a C-level executive to blog.” As a communications coach I have made some fairly strong suggestions to CxOs, but to speak of what I “allow” them is an idea from Mars.

This gaffe excepted, Dee has mostly stayed without the bounds of his own situation and experience, and has not tried to make a blanket prescription for the rest of us.

Returning to Amanda Chapel, lest we too summarily dismiss her, let’s see if she has any points. Ah, yes, look here, I spot one third of one point and one half of another for, hmm, a total of five sixths of a point.

Amanda’s first one-third point lies in the very slight similarity between the blogosphere and an economic bubble. She goes to some effort to define an economic bubble and even illustrates the concept with handsome pictures. She does not, as we might hope, explain how corporate blogging is any such thing, but since there are some small, real similarities that I can see without her help, I give her part of a point.

In discussing economic bubbles, she mentions Alan Greenspan’s famous phrase, “irrational exuberance.” This she compares to the “unrestrained enthusiasm” of Jeff Jarvis, Steve Rubel, BL Ochman, Shel Holtz, Debbie Weil, “and friends,” whom she calls “rabid evangelists.”



In the real world, the irrational exuberance of an economic bubble is far more widespread than five rabid evangelists and some unnamed friends. Near-universality is required in order for a bubble to inflate. Perhaps Amanda believes her wee despised handful of mouth-foamers have actually made the world market in blogs all puffy, but she hasn’t convinced me.

She gets a higher score, a full half-point, when she switches from her bubble to a related image: “Like a pyramid, the last patsy always believes in the investment.” This is the metaphor she should have stayed with, but it appears only in this one sentence.

A pyramid and a bubble are similar and related, but are distinct. A pyramid is what the worst of MLMs (multi-level marketing schemes) are. And the blogosphere (not just corporate blogging, but the whole phenomenon of blogging) does have something in common with MLMs. The key fact here, and downright worthy of highlighting, is:

It's more valuable the earlier you get in.

This is true in an economic bubble, too, but in many bubbles the best returns-per-day are actually achieved near the end. This can seldom be said of MLMs and other pyramids, which usually die not with a bang but a long strangled whimper.

The Simple Reality: You're Late

How is blogging like a multi-level marketing scheme? In three ways:

1. Later entrants have a smaller piece of the pie.
2. Later entrants have to buy from the earlier entrants.
3. Earlier entrants jack up the price later entrants pay.

I know this last point isn't always true of MLMs, but it sometimes is, and it is true of blogging.

"What?" I hear someone gasping. "Is he saying that older bloggers gouge newer ones? Insane! We don't extract a thing from new bloggers!"

First, you do extract something. Those newbies link to you hoping you'll reciprocate. You know they do, and you know that of the oodles of links that keep you high up at Technorati, a large percentage are coming in this manner. Second, it's not gouging because you don't do it on purpose.

Let me preface my explanation by sharing some of my own blogging experience, of which three things are true. 1) I started blogging early, when blogging was unheard of. 2) I started blogging when blogging was immensely popular and the blogosphere was heady with promise. 3) I started blogging late, when blogging was in decline.

Of course this doesn't confuse you. You realize I'm saying that I have started blogging three times and stopped twice. And that the two stops were for long enough that coming back to blogging was truly a fresh start.

First, I tried out Blogger and Radio Userland in early 2002. I can't find the Blogger blog, but the Radio blog still hangs around and embarrasses me like those bare-butt baby pictures our moms should never have taken but insist on showing to our prom dates.

I blogged using Radio from January to April that year. I created thirty-three posts, in the course of which I was put on several blogrolls and was linked to by some pretty popular bloggers, including Dave Winer. I feared I was wasting my fifteen minutes of fame in a blogosphere that was still much too small. When I couldn't talk any of my clients into trying blogging, I stopped doing it myself. Blogging just wasn't ready, nor were the tools.

In 2005 I learned that Wordpress was pretty reliable and not too slow, and I gathered that the blogosphere was now a big enough pool that one could make some serious waves. I started two blogs



and a podcast, tried harder to sell social media to corporate clients, failed to do this, and shut down the blogs and the podcast. This time around, it wasn't the sphere or the tools that weren't ready, it was me. I was working hard as a pastor, ghost-writing a book in a process that felt like a death march, and trying to remember to breathe. Blogging had to go.

Before I left, though, I again took substantial steps toward fame. The two episodes of "Build a Better Podcast" were downloaded by a lot of people, and on my other blog, I got into an exchange with Scoble that brought me a goodly number of readers and subscribers. I was genuinely disappointed that I had to give up blogging and that my one client at that time was too thickheaded to see the value of social media. 2005 was the year to board the RSS bullet train, but my client preferred Greyhound, and I had to disembark early due to motion sickness. I did some inconsequential, half-hearted blogging in 2006, but after my web host made blogging impossible for about ten days in July, I gave up.

My third entry into the blogosphere was just this month (February 2007). This time I'm entirely serious about it. I've given notice at the church that I'll be leaving the pastorate in July, and my duties there have been curtailed. I have no consulting contract just now. I'm preparing for re-entry into full-time consulting, and I have more time to blog than I've ever had before. And here's how famous I'm becoming:

After twenty-two posts in 4 weeks, nobody has linked to me. The feed for my main blog, "The Alpha Mind," has two subscribers other than the four which are just me trying out different aggregators. And it appears my blog has been read by no more than twelve persons other than me.

Am I a worse blogger than I was in 2002? Or in 2005? I don't think so. What I think is that in rejoining the blogosphere this year, I've entered a pyramid after the good takings have been took.



How Late is Fashionably Late?

Now, you ask, can I get back to explaining how earlier bloggers gouge later ones? Now, I remind, I didn't say gouge. What I'm saying is that newer bloggers pay a higher price to get read than earlier ones did.

Here are the economics of blogging in a nutshell. We are deal-

ing in two currencies. Within the blogosphere, the coin of the realm is links. The real-world price you pay for links (for the very privilege of blogging, for that matter) is time.

On the link side, there's one more wrinkle. As we all know, a link is a link is a link... NOT.

The purpose of a link is to bring you readers, subscribers, and more links. A link from a splog is worth near zero. (And depending on how the search engines are feeling about that splog, the value might even be negative.) A link from an A-lister is worth a lot. And if that A-lister explicitly recommends that his readers subscribe to your blog, the link in his post is worth even more.

It seems we need to introduce a unit of link *quality*. Let's call it the scoble, and set its value at one average link from Scobleizer. Then a link from a splog might be worth 0.0001 scobles, and a link from The Huffington Post might be worth 4 scobles and change.

With our unit of value in hand, we can discuss the real economics of blogging. The key question is this: how many minutes of blogging time does it take to earn one scoble? And the answer is, "when do you mean?"

In 2002 it cost very little time to earn a scoble. The blogosphere was small, and Scoble himself was monitoring much of it. Dave Winer was monitoring the rest, and Scoble and Winer worked together. If you were a decent blogger in early 2002, my guess is you could easily have garnered a scoble per 20 posts. I was a lousy blogger, mostly posting drivel about learning to blog, and yet I garnered a link from Winer in my first 33 posts. (As far as I can reconstruct, it wasn't on Scripting News—Dave was running several blogs even back then. So my winer wasn't even worth a whole winer, whatever that might have been in scobles.)

The time I invested was small, even though running Radio Userland on Win98 was a lot like watching your fingernails grow.

In 2005, I garnered an actual, *bona fide*, mint-condition scoble, a link from Robert himself, when I weighed in on the discussion, hot that month, about bloggers versus journalists. I had just started blogging after more than three years away, so I might as well have been a new blogger, except that I was up the learning curve a bit. I received my scoble on my eleventh post of my 1995 career.

If it looks like that cost me less time per scoble than in 2002, it didn't; I was putting in a lot more time reading the A-list bloggers and figuring out what they thought was important, and what to write that would draw a response. So although my outlay in writing time was small, the total price was higher than in 2002. I had done more work by my eleventh post in 2005 than I had put into thirty-three posts three years earlier.



Before we discuss a scoble's cost in today's market, let's make sure we're on the same page about the time value of scobles. I think I heard somebody in the back whispering that a scoble in 2005 was worth a lot more than one in 2002, because Scobleizer was read by many more people in 2005.

True enough, but...

It's just as it is with money. A 2002 scoble, properly invested, would have greatly increased in value by 2005. In fact, Robert Scoble was the star he was in 2005 because he had made good use of the many winers he'd earned in the years before.

If you had a single scoble in January 2002, you were seen by a very significant percentage of the blogosphere of that day. If you simply stayed with the conversation that got you there, and picked up on the conversations that were earning scobles for others, then you'd stand a very good chance of being a Technorati 100 blogger in 2005.

This doesn't mean that a 2002 scoble in 2002 was worth precisely the value of a 2005 scoble in 2005. It simply means that they were good gold coin in both eras, and of roughly equivalent heft.

So, what does it cost to get a scoble today? Scobleizer itself will give us a hint. Here's a post from January 29, 2007:

Why you SHOULD be livid at me

Truth is, I'm just as big a jerk for not linking to cool stuff as anyone else is. Yeah, yeah, I link up plenty enough. It's easy to link to people who are smarter than me. Cooler than me. Better looking than me. Have better news judgment than me. Or, just have better access than me. That's what my link blog is all about.

But, I had it all wrong and 162 comments is all the proof I needed.

I haven't been looking for different ideas. Different blogs. New people who I don't already know.

It's a lot easier to link to Engadget or Dave Winer or Shelley Powers instead of trying to find someone who has a new idea, new way of saying the same old, same old.

What you just read was Robert himself admitting that he had been keeping scobles out of circulation, thus driving their price beyond the means of young bloggers just starting out in life. And what's important to realize about this is that *Robert's hoarding behavior is normal and his repentance is the anomaly.*

Those A-list bloggers whose links you covet? Remember that it costs them time to link to you. It costs them time even to find you. They've got superb lists in their aggregators, and have for years. They have plenty of reading to keep them stimulated, just from the fine bloggers they knew a year ago.



Robert is only bothering to search for new ones because he was there *way* back when, and knows how the blogosphere got started. And he knows that the same mechanism has to keep working in order to keep the sphere going round. (He may also be a bit prone to guilt for other reasons I won't explore.)

Just don't expect every A-list blogger to think the same way.

And don't expect Robert to keep the scoble giveaway window open forever. Even he must have limits to his energy.

Robert is being a gracious host, and pretending today's newcomers are only fashionably late. He is doing this even while Dee Rambeau, like many other guests at the party, are already putting on their coats and scooting.

The Other Long Tail

The "long tail" that is so much discussed today is the long thin mass of micromarkets which attaches to the thicker mass of mini-markets which attaches to the fat body of mainstream markets. Just now, there is another long tail that matters to our discussion. That's the right-hand tail on the bell curve of blogging greatness, or of any other achievement. It's another reason it's increasingly hard for a new blogger to find readers.

Once upon a time, I was clever enough to get admitted to MIT. Which means, I suppose, that I'm somewhat cleverer than the average American. At least it is safe to say that I was better at filling in small circles with a number two pencil than a goodly percentage of people who take the GMAT.

When I got to MIT, I learned that the Sloan School, to which I had been admitted, was home to the dumbest people at the Institute. This was not good news, because the distance between my cleverness and that of the smartest people at Sloan was, oh my goodness, I couldn't even see that far. They were, as Bostonians say, *wicked smart*.

The difference between good and best is tremendous. I have some doubts that even the merely very good can get noticed in today's blogosphere using only the advice I've seen and read.

To start with, let's talk about what one expert believes it costs just to get in the game. The ante, so to speak. On Friday, February 23, 2007, Darren Rouse wrote in his "Problogger" blog:

Daniel at Daily Blog Tips writes 10 Requisites for Professional Bloggers and has some useful things to say under the following headings:



1. Time
2. Expertise on a topic
3. Passion for the topic
4. Writing skills
5. Technical Knowledge
6. Blogging Knowledge
7. Web Design Skills
8. Business/Marketing Knowledge
9. Creativity and Innovative Ideas
10. Network of contacts

I suspect I'm not alone in finding this list daunting. Darren, sensing our discomfort, perhaps, goes on to say that one doesn't really have to be supremely endowed in all ten, and admits that he himself is weak on a couple. But that's just the setup for a sucker punch—he then adds his own list of five requisites, bringing the whole to fifteen.

I don't know whether to laugh or cry.

This list is too long even with the five I couldn't bear to add. The sad thing is that it may be correct.

Blogging was supposed to be like magic. It still ought to be that way. The list of requisites was once a simple three Rs:

- wRiting
- Responding (which implies reading)
- Respect

If you had the hang of these three things you could blog and be noticed. Now, it seems, you need to be some combination of Seth Godin and Om Malik, two very different sorts of genius, to make it.

Excuse me just a minute. I see more people putting on their coats. I'm going to ask them to stay. Hey folks, wait, there's good news coming. Not right away, but a few chapters on. Just wait, you'll see...

Now, where were we? Oh yes, I was about to mention the number of today's A-list bloggers who were already well-known before they ever blogged. Like the aforementioned Seth Godin and Arianna Huffington, and Guy Kawasaki and Dilbert. It seems they were aware of a sixteenth prerequisite to blogging fame: pre-blogging fame. Does that make you feel better?

There there, now... I think I have a box of Kleenex here somewhere...



Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde Park

Clearly, the sweet innocent blogosphere of 2002, in which the Three Rs sufficed, has turned into something different. Let's explore how this has happened.

In his farewell address, Dee Rameau writes "Trust me when I say that the noise level is increasing and the quality of content is decreasing."

Why is the noise level increasing?

One reason is that, to be read, you have to add to the noise. Remember a few pages back when, in discussing the post that got me my 2005 scoble, I said this:

If it looks like that cost me less time per scoble than in 2002, it didn't; I was putting in a lot more time reading the A-list bloggers and figuring out what they thought was important, and what to write that would draw a response.

In other words, I was deliberately working out what to write that would win me links. Like a man who works a dull job to support his passion for stamp collecting, I was earning the points that would buy me the readers who'd read what I really cared about writing.

We'll deal with the authenticity issue later, but for now, let's just say the following:

Even though I did care somewhat about the bloggers vs. journalists debate, and...

even though I wrote a well-worded and well thought-out post, and...

even though I saw ways I could tie what I was writing to my blog's main topic, *still*...

...still I was contributing to noise. A lot more, way more, oceans more words were typed about bloggers versus journalists in 2005 than were really of benefit to humanity.

So, if you want to be read, you must add to the noise. If you only write about your specialty or your own particular passion, then either there will be a popular blogger who will link to you *but who already owns the space*, or there will be less popular bloggers whose links won't bring you much traffic.

So you'll write about what the in-crowd writes about. You'll blog about things that aren't central to your blog, and you'll add to the noise. And you'll make the blogosphere that much more cluttered, and you'll make it that much harder for the next newcomer to get in the door, and you'll drive more good bloggers like Dee Rameau to the bedroom for their coats.



Dee's last post mentions the fact, which once looked so lovely to us, that anyone can blog and say anything they want and nobody can stop them. Dee says:



editor (endangered)

The reason that it was difficult to get published or get on the air in the old days was because you had people judging content...judging talent...filtering just who had access to the microphone or the pen...deciding who actually had something relevant to say. Since the Internet and modern blog tools allow for anyone to publish content, there are no filters. Which means that 99.9 % of the stuff that is written on blogs is bullshit...sure there are individual content creators that will rise to the top...but it's actually MORE difficult now than it was before to have an authentic voice because everyone can be published.

In London's Hyde Park there's a place called Speaker's Corner. This is where anybody who wants to can plop down a soap box and orate. I've heard that some people there have learned some dazzling speaking techniques. And I've heard that some speakers there say things of great substance and import. But, although I've done no primary research, trust me on this: far more Londoners read the Financial Times than go down to Speaker's Corner to learn about the world.

In its entry on Speakers' Corner, Wikipedia has this to say: "Although many of its regular speakers are distinctly non-mainstream, it has been frequented by such people as Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, George Orwell, and William Morris."

I have some notes on that last sentence.

Note 1: When the entry says "many of its speakers are distinctly non-mainstream" it means, "nobody speaks there whose name you will ever, ever hear unless you go down to Speakers' Corner and ask."

Note 2: When it lists those four names you have heard of, it's not because they were non-non-mainstream when they stood at Speakers' Corner. It just means that, of all the folks who've ever orated at the Corner, four of them are, as of today, not nobody. (Don't count the negatives in this note, just accept my apology.)

Note 3: Having Wikipedia close at hand when I read that entry, I looked up the dates of death of the four luminaries. They are: Marx 1883; Lenin 1924; Orwell 1950; Morris 1896. The most recent of these four has been dead for 57 years. The arithmetic mean of their absences from earth is 86.25 years.

Note 4: Even if any one of those four became well-known because of Speakers' Corner, the math in my last note suggests you should not grab a soap box and rush down to Speakers' Corner *today* in search of fame.

Note 5: (By corollary with Note 4...) That the blogosphere did something cool for Wonkette between 2002 and now, or even for me as recently as 2005, does not mean it will do the same for you today. From the date of my treasured scoble to today is, in internet years, about twenty of George Orwell's lifetimes. Things change. They don't always change for the better.

Commodity Sleaze and the Snark Attack

I'll admit I was taken aback by Dee's saying that blogging causes rabies and polarization. I honestly don't see very much of that in action, although compared to the blogs I read in 2002, Strumpette in 2006 is certainly a data point.

Even if I travel in over-nice circles and don't see the things Dee is talking about, I'm aware of why, theoretically, they are almost bound to happen.

Once, in my micro-economics class at business school, we were discussing antitrust law. And one day, when we hadn't exhausted that topic, I arose early enough to read my Wall Street Journal before going to school (rare event), and found an article about Archer Daniels Midland and its alleged efforts to fix prices for carbon dioxide. I didn't keep the article, but I can remember a bit of it because it was so colorful. Based, I think, on recorded conversations, an ADM employee was reported to have said, "Anyone who would sell CO² at \$14 a ton is a homosexual." I don't think he meant this in a good way.

I clipped the article and took it into class, and it became a topic of discussion there. Now by way of background I should say, and notice how carefully I'll say it, that many newspapers have many times allegedly published articles alleging that ADM has allegedly engaged in similar activities. The company was alleged to be notorious for this stuff.

The question came up in class, "why is this company so sleazy?" (I'm sure the speaker meant to say "allegedly sleazy" but slipped.)

We discussed many theories. The one that stayed with me was this:

They deal in commodities.

(Again I write without having done actual research. So read the following as stucco'd all over with caveats.) A commodity product, by definition, has no differentiation. In itself it gives no competitive edge to those who sell it. So the edge must be found somewhere, anywhere else than in the product itself. Under these



Still on the moral high ground and enjoying it, we twittered loud and long.

circumstances, one may expect some edges to be sought at the fringes of ethics or even of legality. Although ADM might have been worse than the average commodity company, one should expect commodity companies generally to be a bit less cleanly than, say, the Hewlett Packard of the 80s. And if they are cleanly, we ought to give them a lot of credit, knowing that they face plenty of pressure to be otherwise.

I repeat that I have no hard data to hand. But I'm aware of a mass of folklore about mining companies, forest products companies, and other traders in commodities, which suggests there may be something to this idea.

Now let's look at this from the other end of the telescope.

There was no accident in my choosing HP for comparative purposes just now. In the late 80s I worked in the marketplace associated with the HP3000 minicomputer. HP was my bread and butter. I didn't work for HP, but I worked in its ecosystem. That HP ecosystem was a country club, the manners very genteel, the ethical standards high.

I vividly remember the conversations that arose the first time a software company in the HP world ran an ad directly attacking a competitor. Attack ads had been unheard of before that day. The rest of us, still on the moral high ground and enjoying it, twittered loud and long like small-town biddies over their white picket fences.

HP led the way in keeping ethics and gentility high. They did things the HP Way™. They sold quality products. They stood behind everything they sold. They didn't lay people off.

And they stood by these principles for *as long as they could afford to*. Since they sold hot computers and robust printers instead of pig iron, pork bellies or hard red winter wheat, they could afford to for quite a while.

But not forever.

As the blogosphere fills with noise, as posts look more and more alike, as blogs become a commodity, we should expect ethics, or at least manners, to erode. It simply has to happen.

The Breathless Pace of Trivial Change

So, we've looked at how the cost of a scoble is rising. Let's review.

It costs more time to get a top blogger's attention. Why? Because, superheroes though some of them are, they haven't the cycles even to read everybody who links to them or comments on their sites. (Or who would comment if the A-lister could afford to permit comments.)

It costs more because it costs more to enter the game at all. One needs to shore up one's position in sixteen assets to get traction.

It costs more because the Hyde Park effect means there's a lot being written, but of decreasing quality, so that one spends more time finding the conversations that are worth entering. You slog through rivers of Umberto Farnworths looking for one George Orwell.

It costs more if, as Dee suggests, the sphere gets crasser, cruder, and uglier as it matures. The process of looking for Orwell gets increasingly stressful, however that might translate into time spent.

But wait. There's more. I believe we haven't exhausted the cost-of-entry question.

I've confessed that when I won my scoble by posting about bloggers versus journalists, there was a degree to which I was consciously fishing for links. But that wasn't my sole motivation. I was actually interested in the topic, because I was interested in blogging. I was interested in blogging because I had become a blogger.

And therein lies yet another cost for the new (and for almost every) blogger: Being a blogger means you have to take some interest in blogging. And I believe it's tougher today to understand blogging than it was even when it was brand new.

Back in 2002, if you knew about blogging at all, you knew about Dave Winer. And if you knew about Dave, you read his blog. And if you read his blog, you got weekly lessons in what blogging meant and how to do it effectively. In hindsight, I realize that when I blogged in 2002, Scripting News and the scant documentation around Radio truly taught me (or offered to, if I'd dared to finish learning) everything I then needed to know about blogging.

It's different now.

Let's start with the process of choosing tools.

In 2002, there must have been tools other than Blogger and Radio, but there was really no need for me to know about them. Either of these two would have been adequate, although Radio was far more adequate than blogger, in ways I'll get to when this essay turns to constructive suggestions.

If you enter blogging today, there are a sea of options for the tools you'll need. Here are a few web sites offering help. Of course, I'm not sending you there for help, I'm just bringing from these sites a few statistics about hyperabundance.

You'll need a blogging tool (by which you'll post posts): asymptomatic.net has a list of 15. Alas, some serious contenders are

In 2002,
Scripting News
and the scant
documentation
around Radio
taught me
everything I
needed to
know.

missing from this list. So after you test out 15 tools until mold grows on your ears, there are still others you can seek out and try.

Of course, a posting tool is not enough. You also have to read other blogs, so you need an RSS aggregator; aggcompare.com lists 63 of these. Again, I'm pretty sure the list is incomplete.

If you want podcasts, you may need a different aggregator for those, and podcatchermatrix.org has a list of 19 of them for you to compare.

Wait. After checking out these tools, you may still have the breath of life in you, but you're not done. To be the very model of a modern blogger, you still need to understand Technorati, Google Blog Search, and their many competitors, to help you find blogs to interact with.

Then you need to understand social tagging: del.icio.us and [digg](http://digg.com) are *de rigueur*, but they're far from alone.

In fact, I'd better stop. I haven't even mentioned the dark underworld of kludgy tools (not to mention poor service and deceptive practices) you'll enter if you decide to get a host for your own domain.

Wait... I need to breathe...

There. Now. Now I'm ready to mention that after you've spent eons choosing your tools, once a week or so you'll read a blog telling you why you chose the wrong tool, and you'll be tempted to start over, and I mostly hope you won't but hey it's your life and if the new tool is by Google maybe you'd better check it out after all.

And now I'll mention that all the foregoing is only about tools directly related to blogging. Once you've started down this road, you'll have to understand the whole universe of social media. Go to Wikipedia and ask for "list of social software," and be very, very afraid. Then realize that that list only covers social *software*, not sites, and that Second Life isn't even there. Nor are [squidoo](http://squidoo.com), amihot.com, or dozens, probably hundreds, of others.

Then there are still all the concepts, manners and mores, gossip and argot you'll have to learn. *Of course* you'll take an interest in debates about blogging; by the time you've blogged for a month, you'll be deeply, deeply invested.

When I went into semi-retirement from consulting to serve as a pastor, for most of my first year I worked about sixty hours a week for the church. I largely ignored technology, and used the web only for basic research. After a while I got itchy and found a single consulting client to keep me somewhat plugged into the real world. Even then, for months the only technology I studied was the technical specialties in my client's space. Although I had blogged be-

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fore, I ignored blogs and all other social media for almost two years. I mostly went back to the blogosphere because I thought blogging might benefit my one active client, or some other client I might unearth.

And when I started reading blogs and daily news updates... when I checked out the brave new world of social media... when I really got plugged into web 2.0... when I fully joined the 21st century... guess what? I found I had missed almost nothing of true and lasting importance. There were hundreds of new tools, sites, concepts, fashions, things you simply *must* know about, dahling, or else be—shudder!—someone who doesn't get it.

And of all this new cool stuff, only the tiniest fraction of it will even appear in small print in endnotes in 2012. But you'll spend a vast and precious chunk of your life learning it all so you can be hip and cool and a real netizen version 2.0.

Do You Eat the Last Sandwich or Give It To the Zombie?

I haven't tried to quantify what I've talked about. "Until mold grows on your ears" is both a flippant and an imprecise way of saying "a lot of time." I can't say how many hours it will take the average new blogger to get set up and then earn a scoble, and of course no blogger is the average blogger. Your mileage will necessarily vary.

I've only tried to point out that in entering the blogosphere today, you'll be entering a time sink whose bottom is way, way down there.

Blogging's heyday is over. So is it worth doing at all? It is worth any of your most precious resource?

After the neutron bomb holocaust, when the streets aren't safe because the undead roam them, and supplies are running low, and some of the blank-eyed people who come to your windows and scare the snot out of you are folks you once knew and loved, you just might face the question faced by all business people in declining markets and resource scarcity:

Do you eat the last sandwich or give it to the zombie?

Do you keep those hours for courtship and watercoloring, or do you put them into a blog and see if it comes to life?

The answer depends on how much you love the zombie and how dead you think it is.



Back to the Future of Blogging

Thanks for staying with me.

I've shared with you the dark night of my own blogging soul. Now, at long last, I can provide some relief. This essay's bleakest hour is over. As G. M. Hopkins wrote:

And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs...

...and dawn is coming right now.



Blogging is not dead. It's not even sleeping. It needs only one thing: an institutional memory that can reach as far back as 2002. Those were good times, and they can, in some measure, be brought back.

Back to the Three Rs

To begin with, every blogger can resolve to keep the three Rs foremost.

wRite.

Respond.

Respect.

Whatever other Requisites there may be, these are the three that matter.

Keeping Your Head in the Clouds

Next, we can decide to be true to ourselves. The slope from being who you once were to being a blog-obsessed half-human is a slippery one, but we can take the warnings of Dee Rambeau and others (there will be lots of others) seriously. The thing I love most about Dee's farewell post is that his primary reason to stop blogging is a wonderful one: he wants to live life. We can let folks like Dee remind us of singing, of sunshine, of our souls and our spouses. We can let our lives shape our blogs, and not vice versa.

I'm doing a little bit of that in writing this essay.

You see, I get a little tired of the rule I've imposed on myself, which says I should try to keep my posts to under five hundred words. This essay started out as an ordinary post, on which I was going to impose that limit. But at some point, when I realized that five hundred words meant cutting out 95% of what I wanted to say, I threw down the rule and stomped on it.

There had been a buildup to this violent scene.

On January 31st, my feed reader brought me a long post from one of my favorite blogs, Grant McCracken's "This Blog Sits at the Intersection of Anthropology and Economics." The post, titled

“Cloudiness: of selves, groups, networks and ideas,” was fascinating. I really really wanted to blog it. I hope you’ll dare to read it even after I tell you it’s 2652 words long and isn’t even great writing.

I didn’t blog it. There were problems with the post that I couldn’t overcome, and I wasn’t sure I wanted to send my own audience, if I had any, over to a read so long and so flawed.

One of its flaws was that much of its very good substance was only hinted at, not clarified or fully explicit. Having an interest in economics, a passing interest in anthropology, and a deep and abiding interest in anthropology’s subject of study, humanity, I could see clearly what McCracken only murkily limned. But if I blogged a response to it, these were the very parts I’d want to respond to, so that I’d need to do a good bit of McCracken’s work for him, finishing thoughts he had barely started before I could add my own.

I couldn’t afford it.

A couple of weeks later, there came another long post that engaged me close and home. It was on Paul Graham’s blog, an essay of 3751 words titled “Is It Worth Being Wise?”

This time I did blog. (I simply had to. My blog is called “The Alpha Mind,” and Paul Graham is a prime example of what the phrase means.) I had one short comment I could make about the subject, and I made it on my own blog.

Wisdom is a subject I care about deeply—I hope I live long enough to write a book about it. But precisely because this is true, the act of writing a short post and then letting go was wrenching. I felt like Tantalus.

The cloudiness McCracken is exploring, and Graham’s question of wisdom, are topics worthy of discussion by all bloggers. This is because they are *about blogging*. And they are about blogging in a far more important way than are all the words we spill about tools, and journalism, and whether Hobson and Holtz are rabid evangelists or just smart guys who appreciate social media.

Cloudiness and wisdom are all about how blogging interacts with life, and this matters very, very much.

There’s the background. There’s why, when I read Dee’s two posts about his resignation from the sphere, and sat down and tried to respond, I found I couldn’t bear to keep it short. My short post became a long post, the long post became too long to be a post at



all, and this modest (in length; in attitude it's rather brazen) book was born.

Unlike Dee, I'm not a software entrepreneur. I'm a consultant, at the center of whose consulting practice is writing. I started writing for a living because, after I'd spent decades studying writing, I found that the management consulting world needed my skills. I admit that the ghost writing I've done in that world is to real writing as prostitution is to a happy marriage. But, by a process I could never have predicted, it has transformed me from somebody who dreamed of being a writer into somebody who—it shocked me when I realized it—is a writer.

Just throw
down your
own rules
about post
length and
post topic, and
stomp, stomp,
stomp.

Unlike Dee, I don't play golf, have dogs, or love photography. I'm not even a travel writer because travel takes too much time away from writing. There are other things I love, singing and walking and preaching and holding babies. But mostly I'm a writer. If blogging had kept me indoors all this weekend, it wouldn't have been a loss, because it's a weekend I would have spent indoors writing anyway.

I rebelled from blogging this weekend because it almost kept me from writing, until I decided in a ferocious act of will to do both, and place this essay before you.

I say all of that because there are many people in the blogosphere who are there because they are writers. It's only a little decision, a little ferocious act of will, that is wanting before this group of people realize that they can blog *and* live the life they want to live, the life of a writer. Just throw down your own rules about post lengths and post topics, and stomp, stomp, stomp.

The Trash in the Attic

When I say that blogging competes with writing, I'm not being silly, honest I'm not.

If you know what an interesting person is, you know that many if not most of them are easily distracted. Interesting people are that way because of their curiosity, because they learn a lot and love to share it. This is why some of the people who have the most awesome things to write for us are also the ones in the most danger of falling into the rodent-holes of social media and coming back with nothing really worth reading. (I know there's an ill-tempered queen and a long-nosed guy mad as a hatter down there in MySpace, but c'mon, it's been done.) Web 2.0 offers far too many distractions, and blogging is the way to those distractions. So it's not just blogging's arbitrary rules that stifle real writing, it's those distractions.

There's no point in telling people to be less distractible. They can't, or they'd stop being interesting.

Interesting people *will* find trivia. Sometimes they'll write it up.

Sometimes it remains trivia.

Sometimes it becomes a thing of beauty and a joy forever, like when Kathy Sierra passes on a video of a newborn horse standing up for the first time, and one's breath stops, and one prays for the beast, and one cheers and claps when the deed is at last accomplished.

And at all times, the decision is in the eye of the beholder. I loved the foal, gasped and prayed and clapped. Someone else might have hit J and moved on.

It happened once that Dr. Watson told Holmes something or other about outer space, which I have cleverly forgotten. Holmes thanked Watson for his trouble, and then promised to do his best to forget what he had just been told. As Watson ahemed and here nowed and furrowed his brow, Holmes explained his attic theory of the human mind.

Although I have tried to forget it, that theory goes something like this. The human mind is an attic. It has only so much room. Therefore, since knowledge of the outer solar system can never make the tiniest difference in one's life, one should never take up good attic space with it. There are, after all, important things to stow there, like the various colors and textures of cigar ashes, and the chemical properties of postage stamp adhesives.

Holmes, of course, was wrong. It can almost be said that the more we put into our brains the more our brains can hold, because each thing we learn is a hook on which something else can be hung, each fact is a string on which another is tied and by which it can be retrieved.

Most everyone who has interesting treasures in his mental attic also has a zillion worthless tchatchkes. The priceless Tiffany lamp and the Chutes and Ladders game with the busted spinner were picked up by the same process.

Herein lies blogging's great conundrum. You can find some trivia that you can polish into a gem. But you can also keep pursuing trivia until your chance to write is passed and you have to go to bed or face divorce. Or you can write up the first, second, or third



piece of trivia you find, and go to bed having made pyrite when the seventh doodad, which you never got to, could have been spun into finest gold.

I know it sounds like I'm back to recounting blogging's problems, but I'm not. This time I'm talking about a personal problem that arises in precisely those people who have the potential to be great, to truly enrich our lives by their writing.

And it's a problem which can be alleviated by remembering 2002, by going back to the future of blogging.

The Kool-Aid at Auburn

When Dee said goodbye to his own blog, he didn't swear off blogging. He wrote two posts, one on his blog, and another on Marcom Blog, to which he is a regular contributor. Marcom Blog



is run by the communications students of Robert French at Auburn University. There Dee stated that he will continue to contribute; he was only ceasing to post on his own site.

Dee was taken to task by Allan Jenkins, who found many flaws in Dee's thinking, only one of which I firmly agree is a flaw (see "allow a C-level executive to blog", above). Dee took the time to reply to Jenkins by way of comments to Jenkins's post. He also replies to the comments of others in the

same conversation. In the course of all this, Dee mentions the students at Auburn:

One thing I might add is that what is right for me may not be right for others...but since blogging gave me a platform from which to spew my opinion, I took the opportunity. It is my blog after all. As for MarcomBlog, I think if you read some of the students' comments, you'll find that they were aching for a contrary opinion. The koolaid was getting a little too sweet!

This raised some howls among others, but for me it simply set me to thinking, and to exploring Marcom Blog.

What I find is that over there at Auburn, the students aren't drinking that much Kool-Aid. They are being exposed to the concept of blogging, and they are being given an opportunity to blog together, in their own.... their own... thingy.

Thingy? Yes. That's the best I can do. I admit I haven't spent hours on the site, but that's because of yet another ferocious act of will. I decided I can't afford it.

In the time I did spend, I saw some things of interest. I saw something cool, but not Kool-Aid. I saw (as with Grant

McCracken's clouds, dimly outlined and far off in the mist) hints of a decent and happy future for blogging.

The students at Auburn are getting a view of blogging that isn't quite that of today's average new blogger. The latter enters an immense, cluttered chamber where one can hardly hear oneself think. The Auburn students enter a tidy and friendly mini-blogsphere with themselves at the center, and with very well chosen bloggers invited to come and join them. As I say, the rest of today's blogsphere isn't like that, and so for their education about blogging in 2007, this is not entirely good.

But what is wonderful, is delightful, is full of glorious promise, is this: that with a few tweaks to what they're doing, they could get a taste of blogging in 2002. They could thus be prepared to bring a bit of that sweetness and light into today's sphere when they're ready to enter it, and in so doing make the whole world a better place.

Even as it is, they can cut their blogging teeth and get recognition at the same time, from each other and perhaps from such worthies as Lee Hopkins. This recaptures one of the most important features of the early blogsphere: it was a small and friendly world in which recognition came easily.

There's more than that to 2002, and I should explain the rest of it now.

One Last Bit of Gloom

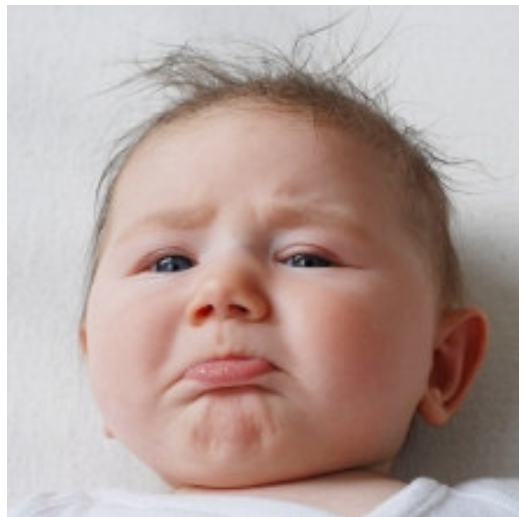
First, unavoidably, I must make a final statement about how bad things are now.

I have talked about the scoble as if the only coin one could possibly pursue is the whole complete scoble, an actual link from an A-list blogger. This, of course, is rot. You can always go for the B-list, and collect farthings until you've got the equivalent of a scoble, and you've done just as well.

Sadly, nowadays this approach could take you as long as going after the A-list. In part this is because nobody publishes the B-list, or the C-list, or the D-list, or.... you get it.

And partly it's because among those non-A bloggers are many who look good at first read but on closer acquaintance are morons.

Perhaps they're not inherently morons. More likely, it's just that when they enter today's sphere, they encounter too much advice about how to blog. So much that they can quite easily get the graduate level lessons before they've taken course 101.



Course 101 is those three Rs, the second of which, you recall, is Respond.

Nowadays you can read a decent post by a fresh new blogger. Welcoming the chance to welcome, you can spend a quarter-hour or more composing a thoughtful comment to add to the conversation. Then you can learn over the course of the next month, as you devote three minutes a day to going back to see your comment, that comments are moderated and none are approved but those by the blogger's grade school chums.

Nowadays you can read a decent post by a new blogger, and you can go to your own blog and cite it and respond, and then learn (at the cost of yet more time) that it was only stolen and pasted from a real blog. And by the time you learn this, the real conversation on that real blog is stale and dead and you'll look like a dolt if you enter it with your response which is now also stale.

As Dave Barry is fond of saying, I am not making this up!

These new bloggers are precisely the ones who ought to understand response and reciprocity, without which they die, and they do die after stealing your time, but that doesn't mean they disappear because like those stinking zombies who gratuitously showed up in this essay, new ones keep coming and coming and coming and...

...and when you finally get a link from a new blogger, you've got a link worth a fraction of a farthing for an outlay near as large as might have won you a freshly minted big-S Scoble.

And my grouching about 2007 is now truly finished.

Tiny Bubbles

Here's what it was like in 2002.

Radio was slow, crashy, ill-documented, almost user-hostile... and an utter joy to dance with. This is because it wasn't just a tool for posting. It was a doorway to a whole blogging environment, and in many important ways it *was* that environment.



Radio had its own feed aggregator, which was not great but was adequate, and it was right there with the posting tool, a situation for which to this day I pine.

Radio had its own little Technorati, a window onto the small pool of fresh-faced, idealistic Radio users, and this was the community to which you were introduced within minutes of installing the software. The tool showed you who blogrolled whom, who had most recently posted, who was read the most, who had just read your latest post, lots of wonderful things. The Radio

community had its own guru, Dave Winer, who (detractors, I laugh you to scorn, HAH!) was well worth reading. (I'd been reading DaveNet since 1998. In my aggregator, Dave's feed still lives in a folder called Great Minds.)

That small community read each other, and read Winer and Scoble, and learned the three Rs before their fourth post, and (may I be forgiven for using this expression) they *got it*, and they got it early.

This happened because it was small enough to get.

Now back to Auburn. Here's what I recommend the students there do. It will save them lots of time and only cost a few million dollars—oh, did I forget to mention that earlier?—and the result will be a set of tools that will actually benefit the world and around which there might be a business model.

I. Realize that the problem with today's blogosphere is not that it's a bubble, but that it's too big and noisy a bubble. Build yourselves a tiny bubble, a 2002 time capsule. Build a blogosphere that's almost like Marcom Blog, in that it's just you and a few old hands willing to teach. But one that's unlike Marcom Blog in that each of you *must* build your own blog.

II. Choose a small and manageable toolset. Each of you should get a posting tool (a free one), your own domain (you're going to kick yourself anyway if yourname.com gets taken next month because you stalled), and an aggregator. *And nothing else.* (except maybe Skype, which rocks and is not a time sink). Have your volunteer mentors get together and produce a list of no more than three of each tool for you to choose from, so you can help each other learn to use them. The only other tools you need are the expensive custom ones I will spec out a bit farther on.

III. Set a time period in which, together, you will learn blogging.

IV. For this time period, make a pact with each other to do the following things:

1. Devote time to learning to blog before you go down the rodent-holes of other social media. Blogging is the medium that matters to you and is accessible to all of you, as podcasting may not be. Your pact should be, for this period of time, you will just blog. If one of you *must* go build an ugly page on MySpace, keep it to yourself. You are communicators, and if you follow my advice, blogging will help make mature and fine writers of you; MySpace and Second Life will not.

If you follow my advice, blogging will help make mature and fine writers of you; MySpace and Second Life will not.

2. Blog using your real names. I don't read bloggers who won't personally own up to every word they write. Why should I bother when you can never have a real honest encounter with them?
3. Your email address must be given to your classmates even if you do not put it on your site. You have to be able to communicate with each other offblog. (I know this is probably already the case.)
4. Spend a certain amount of time reading each other's blogs at least 4 days per week.
5. Each of you on your own blog, respond to another blog, with a link, at least 4 posts a week.
6. Set up (each of you) a blogroll using this formula:
 - Four classmates assigned to you at random. The only excuse for removing one is that they've behaved so badly they should be booted from the tiny bubble.
 - Four classmates of your choosing, which you may change at any time and for any reason.
 - Two of your outside mentors, assigned at random.
 - Two of your outside mentors of your choosing, changeable at will.



- The Marcom Blog, which should be kept up as a group blog and central meeting place, and is well worth bringing the world in to see.
- NOT MORE than three other blogs, because you don't want to dilute the click-through effectiveness of your blogroll by bloating it. One of these blogs, of course, should be The Alpha Mind. ☺

By the way, when I say blogroll, I'm not referring to the feed list in your aggregator (some folks are now using the term to mean that), but to the blogroll on your own blog.

The Blogging Time Machine

Before I go on to spec out the custom tool, let's look at the consequences of what I've recommended.

Consequence 1: You are not shutting out the big beautiful ugly fascinating enchanting disgusting whole real blogosphere of 2007. You've simply chosen to let in only so much of it as won't befoul the small, friendly, collegial classroom of your own blog academy.

Consequence 2: A significant part of the outside world that you're letting in is hand-chosen. You've got a good group of mentors already. Under this plan, their workload on your behalf might increase a bit, but I think some of them would stay. I think a fine chap like Lee Hopkins (if he didn't crush himself with other burdens), would absolutely love to help you turn into bloggers who'll make Auburn proud.

Consequence 3: You are committing yourselves to the three Rs before you even blog, so you won't make the horrid mistakes made by bloggers who never learn them.

Consequence 4: You are experiencing the best of 2002. Enjoy it.

A Technorati That Measures What Matters

Of course, the time will come when you'll graduate from your tiny bubble, and emerge fully into the blogosphere that exists on whatever day this happens. This sphere is will be the place where you'll have to decide to stay or leave.

What you need is a tool which will help you make the transition, and which, as you share it with others, will make that blogosphere a lot more fun. You'll probably have to build it yourselves, but it just might make you rich.

The tool I have in mind is a new Technorati, but one which measures what matters to the new blogger.

And, you ask, what matters?

What matters is a set of metrics that will help you find those bloggers who understand the three Rs, who will appreciate your efforts to engage with them, who will raise your profile as you raise theirs, and who will expand your horizons and help you grow as writers.

Those metrics are:

- Reciprocity of linking. It's fine to measure the links into a site. But how many does it reciprocate? This is not simply the ratio of incoming to outgoing links, because for an A-list blogger, that ratio almost has to be low. But it's this measure: of all the outgoing links from this blog, how many are to the originating domain of an incoming link?
- Reciprocity of linking *to newcomers*. Of the outgoing links from a blog, how many are responses to blogs which themselves have few incoming links? In other words, is this blog helping new bloggers?
- Serendipity. How many links out of a site are new for that site and not in response to incoming links? In other words, is the

The measures that matter: reciprocity and serendipity.

site doing what Robert Scoble has recently pledged to do, seeking out new stuff and appreciating it?

The tool should allow you to do searches based on these metrics. You'll have to make your own decisions about what scores belong to the sites you want to interact with. Of course, you don't want 100% reciprocity. That's just a link-swapping site, of no interest to anyone. And of course, serendipity is incompatible with perfect reciprocity, and you want some serendipity in the feeds you put in your aggregator.

Now imagine the world we've created. You've gone through a little blog academy at Auburn. You've learned, in a few weeks, what matters. You've probably made a few lifelong blogging friends, with whom you can share the joys and sorrows of post-graduation life. And with the toolset you chose and developed, when you sit down to blog, you strap yourself into a high-performance machine.

Imagine being able to check your email and find that somebody has just blogged about something you care about. And not just that (Google Alerts can do that today), but the email can tell you that this person uses a real name, accepts comments in which links are

permitted, leaves comments on other blogs, reciprocates over 25% of incoming links even while receiving over twenty of them a day, seeks out new sites for more than 15% of her blogging, and insults others only minimally. She's somebody you want to blog.

In the Radio world of 2002, you could have spotted her with the naked eye. Now you need a tool, but what a sweet tool!

With it, however overgrown and ugly the blogosphere becomes, you can, with minimal wasted time, read what stimulates and enlightens you, and write what will do the same for others.

It's like playing fetch with Dee's dogs, like raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens, like the first daffodil of spring, like cold water after beach volleyball, like discovering Orwell, like playing ultimate Frisbee with non-jerks, like dancing with a real dancer, like chocolate, like...

...well, not as fine as a good marriage, but it will leave you time for one.



The Future Just Became Obsolete

In the subtitle of this little book, I said every book on blogging written before 2009 is already obsolete.

I said it because the future of blogging, as it has been taking shape, is as old as the decay of Cabrini Green or the stink of the Union Stockyards. But a new future can be invented. I don't really think I've invented it. I don't think I've even imagined it, and I can't implement the part I've imagined. But I've given hints.

I dare you...

I dare you, whoever you are (you know I didn't write this just for Robert French's students)

I dare you, somebody out there...

Build it. Bring it. Make it happen.

It was so good, and it can be good again. I don't know exactly what it will look like. But it can be good again. I'm sure of it.



un-late

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<http://www.sxc.hu/profile/barrym67>
time machine: Photo of an entry in the Discarde D’Arte Recycled Sculpture
Contest, Hot Springs, AR. <http://www.ci.hot-springs.ar.us/dept-parks-gallery.html>
telescope: Martti Vire, Rauma, Finland <http://www.wanhatpurjelaiivat.net/>
[My un-late parrot is actually] “Rainbow Lorikeet”: Sarah Williams.
Brisbane, QLD, Australia. <http://www.sxc.hu/profile/MeHere>

About the Author

Max Christian Hansen is a consultant who helps intelligent people and companies to look and sound as smart as they are, to take positions as thought leaders, and to use these positions to achieve their wildest dreams.

Max was educated at Northwestern University and the MIT Sloan School of Management. He has studied at the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and is currently serving as the pastor of Berkeley Friends Church, Berkeley, CA, from which he will retire in July, 2007.

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