How to Blog: Best Practices

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Katysblog.Wordpress.Com

- I have been writing Katysblog since 2005.
- Average rate of three entries a week, for a current total of 1,669 posts.
- 1,497 regular readers (blog subscribers). Many more read Katysblog through LinkedIn, Twitter, and Wordpress.
- In my 2014 blog annual report, Wordpress told me:

  The concert hall at the Sydney Opera House holds 2,700 people. This blog was viewed about 17,000 times in 2014. If it were a Sydney concert, it would take about 6 sold-out performances for that many people to see it.

- I also contribute articles to other blogs from time to time.
- My company *Mentoring Standard* uses Wordpress as our website platform: ***mentoringstandard.com***

What is a Blog?

- A **Blog** (or web log) is a discussion or informational site on the World Wide Web consisting of entries or posts, with the most current displayed first. Blogs can be original or curated, contain only text or text with images, can be written by one or a few authors, and are usually interactive - with readers leaving comments.
Popular free services: Wordpress, Blogger, LinkedIn, Blogspot, Medium, Quora.

- A **Microblog** is a form of blog that is smaller in size.
Popular free services: Twitter, Tumblr.

- A **Photo Blog** is focused more on images than text.
Popular free services: Instagram, Flickr, Pinterest.

- A **Newsletter Blog** is a curated presentation of related material with a defined point of view and style.
Popular services: TinyLetter, BlogHer

Blog Statistics

- Over 409 million people view more than 19 billion blog pages each month.
- Users produce about 52 million new posts and 47 million new comments each month.
- Wordpress:
  - Blogs are written in over 120 languages, the top 5:
    - English: 71%
    - Spanish: 4.7%
    - Indonesian: 2.4%
    - Portuguese (Brazil): 2.3%
    - French: 1.5%
  - Over 60 Million websites
  - 23% of the top 10 Million blogs

Not an Even Global Distribution

(an opportunity for visibility!)

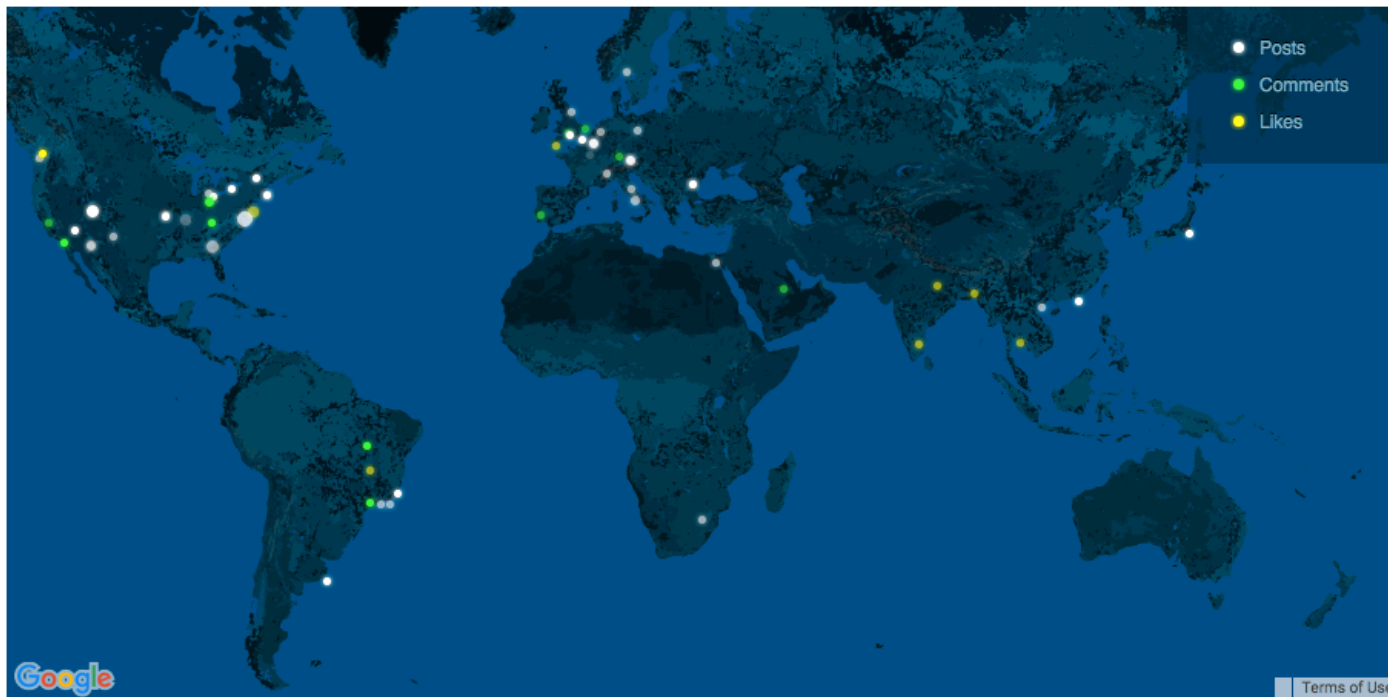A live look at activity across WordPress.com

Image from https://wordpress.com/activity/

Select Your Platform Carefully

Blogger Usage Statistics
Websites using Blogger
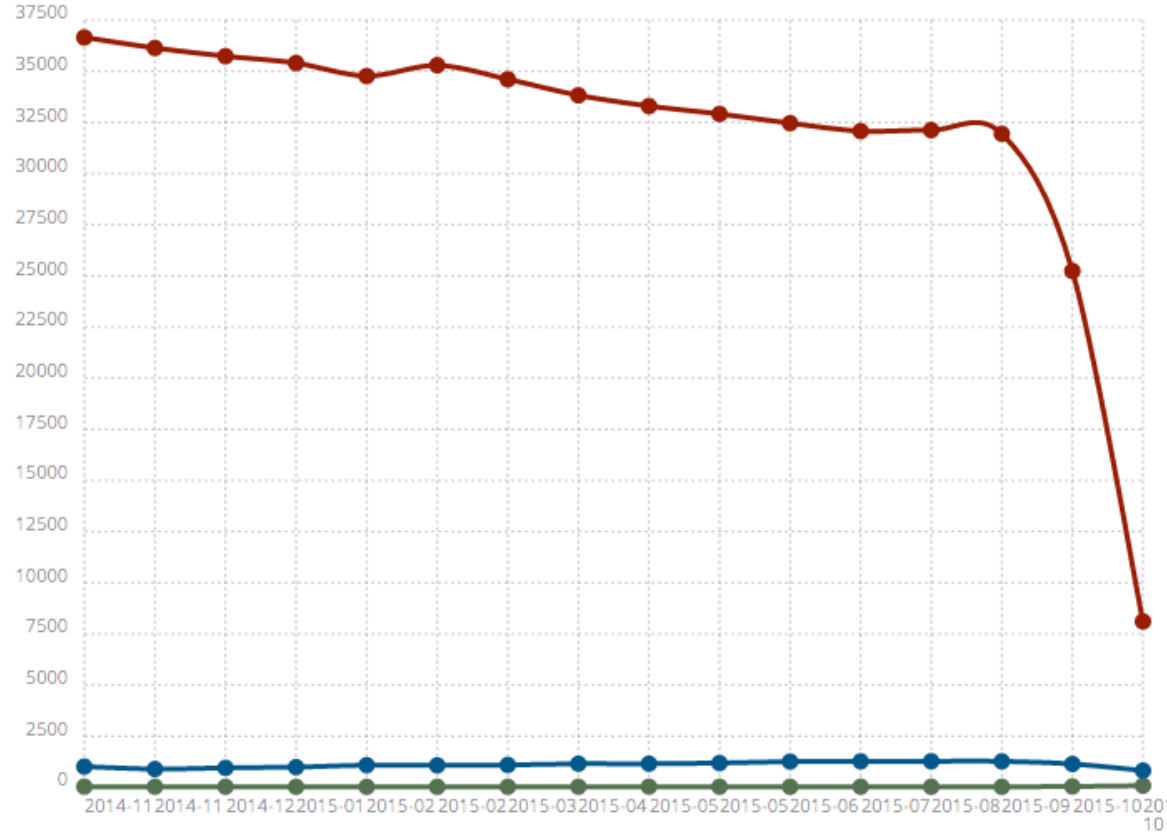
Image from http://trends.builtwith.com/cms/Blogger

Why Should You Write a Blog?

- Communicating with community, family, friends.
- Enlarging your circle, telling your story through personal experience, informing the world about your culture, community, context.
- Learning how to write for a big audience, interacting with readers.
- Improving your research and writing composition skills through regular practice.
- *Having fun!*

How to Write a Blog 1

- Every writer must find her own voice, style, and audience.
- The best way to learn to blog is to read other people's blogs, then write your own. Blogs to consider:
  - https://katysblog.wordpress.com/
  - http://jessicadickinsongoodman.com/
  - https://www.techwomen.org/blog
  - http://tinyletter.com/realfuture
  - http://celebratewhatsright.com/daily-celebrations
  - http://www.azzarellogroup.com/web/
- Expect to spend at least two hours a week (every week) working on your blog.
- Consistent publishing and quality makes your readers want to come back.
- Partner with another blogger long-term to share ideas and web tools – mine is my daughter Jessica Dickinson Goodman

How to Write a Blog 2

- In putting together each blog entry, focus on 3 areas, in this order:
  - **Topic**
  - **Images**
  - **Writing Composition**
- Consider a single topic for each entry, starting with a subject of special interest.
- Within that general requirement, each entry topic must also be one or more of the following:
  - **Entertaining**
  - **Educational or Historical**
  - **Newsworthy**

How to Write a Blog 3

- Decide what matters to you and your audience, then write about it.
- If you enjoy taking pictures: a photo will often inspire a blog entry – with the text expressing what is of interest in that image.
- Once you start composing, work to ensure that **not one word is wasted**. Be respectful of your reader's time and precious attention by being succinct.
- Three words of advice for successful bloggers:
  - **Be authentic**
  - **Be respectful**
  - **Be brief**
- Once you have established your blog, ask your family, friends, and community to read it and send you comments.
- Use webtools like **HootSuite** to cross-post to other social media venues.

Bloggers' Rights - in the USA

Electronic Frontier Foundation
https://www.eff.org/bloggers

- Bloggers can be journalists (and journalists can be bloggers).
- Bloggers are entitled to free speech.
- Bloggers have the right to political speech.
- Bloggers have the right to stay anonymous.
- Bloggers have freedom from liability for hosting speech the same way other web hosts do.

Research and the Web

- Part of blogging is doing research - checking facts carefully and providing links to references or data sources when available.

- Even after checking my work, I often have to go back to a published entry to make corrections or additions.

- You must respect other people's rights, especially copyrights, if you want yours to be respected in turn. Part of research is learning what is copyrighted.

- In writing your blog, research and accuracy are important. Here are some *free* online resources to help:
  - Electronic Frontier Foundation
  - Public web-based search engines
  - Wikipedia
  - Wolfram Alpha

Public Search Engines

Google, Yahoo, and other search engines can be used in complex ways to give sophisticated results:

- Use a public web search engine to find what is inside a private website. Not all websites offer easy internal search or navigation. You can use a public search engine instead. *For example: typing "site:newtimes.co.rw women" into your search engine navigation bar will search the New Times website for articles about Rwandan Women.*

- To find pictures, search by "Images" not just by "Web". Type your terms into the search bar as usual then click on Images.

- Search engines can function as a calculator by typing your equation into the search bar. This also works for currency conversion.

- A search engine can also be used as a dictionary or thesaurus.

- For updates on current news stories, enter a search term and click "News".

Wikipedia & Wolfram Alpha

- **Wikipedia** is a collaboratively edited, multilingual Internet encyclopedia. Millions of people contribute their knowledge to create the world's largest and most popular reference work.

- You can contribute to Wikipedia yourself – read more on the Notable Women in Computing pages from Duke University: *http://www.cs.duke.edu/csed/wikipedia/*

- **Wolfram Alpha** uses free-form input, analyzes it and uses "curated data" (from real databases) to give you expert knowledge.

Blogging & Research Resources

- "A Fair(y) Use Tale" (a 2007 short film on copyright, fair use and the law by Eric Faden): *http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJn_jC4FND0*
- Blogging Resources for Teachers:
  - *http://www.teachingquality.org/content/blogs/bill-ferriter/blogging-resources-classroom-teachers*
  - *http://www.edutopia.org/blog/start-teacher-blog-tips-resources-matt-davis*
- Introduction to Blogging: *http://codex.wordpress.org/Introduction_to_Blogging*
- Teaching Copyright (for kids and teens - Electronic Frontier Foundation): *http://www.teachingcopyright.org*
- How to search on Google: *https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/134479?hl=en*
- Wikipedia: *http://www.wikipedia.org*
- Wolfram Alpha: *http://www.wolframalpha.com*
- How to use Wolfram Alpha*: https://www.wolframalpha.com/tour/examples.html*
- Yahoo Effective Searches: *https://help.yahoo.com/kb/search/SLN2242.html*

Wordpress Tools

- **Hootsuite** broadcasts to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn
- Some of the Wordpress plugins (web tools) I use:
  - Akismet – spam protection
  - Black Studio TinyMCE Widget – visual editor
  - BruteProtect – security protection
  - Clef – login security
  - Favicon by RealFaviconGenerator – icon creation
  - Jetpack by Wordpress.com – cloud connection
  - P3 (Plugin Performance Profiler) – speed optimization
  - Page Builder by SiteOrigin – drag and drop building tool
  - Remove Protected – takes off "Protected:" from titles
  - RSS Importer – import posts
  - RSS Multi Importer – merging multiple feeds
  - SiteOrigin Widgets Bundle – widgets framework
  - Smart Slider 2 – responsive slider
  - Types – custom taxonomies
  - WP Super Cache – fast caching
  - WP-RSSImport – import feeds

Advertisements, Web Commerce

- The more successful your blog, the more strangers will want to ride your success.

- Offers to advertise or be a "guest author" through your blog will come from many sources – many of which have nothing to do with your style and message.

- Consider your policy in advance.

Questions?

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