How to Blog: Best Practices

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This is Me

Katy Dickinson with students
Mother Board Workshop, February 2016, in Gaza City

My History as a Blogger

- Writing Katysblog since 2005.

- 1,743 posts so far (on Katysblog).

- 2,171 regular readers (blog subscribers).
  Many more read Katysblog through LinkedIn, Twitter, and Wordpress.

- Contribute articles to other blog sites from time to time.

- My company *Mentoring Standard* uses Wordpress as a website platform: ***mentoringstandard.com***

What is a Blog?

- A **Blog** (or web log) is a discussion or information site on the World Wide Web made up of entries or posts, with the most current displayed first. Blogs can be:
  - Original - or curated
  - Contain only text - or text with images
  - Written by one - or many authors
  - Interactive (with readers leaving comments) – or not.
  - *Popular free services: Wordpress, Medium, Ghost, Joomla.*

- 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.*

Why Blog? To Be Heard!
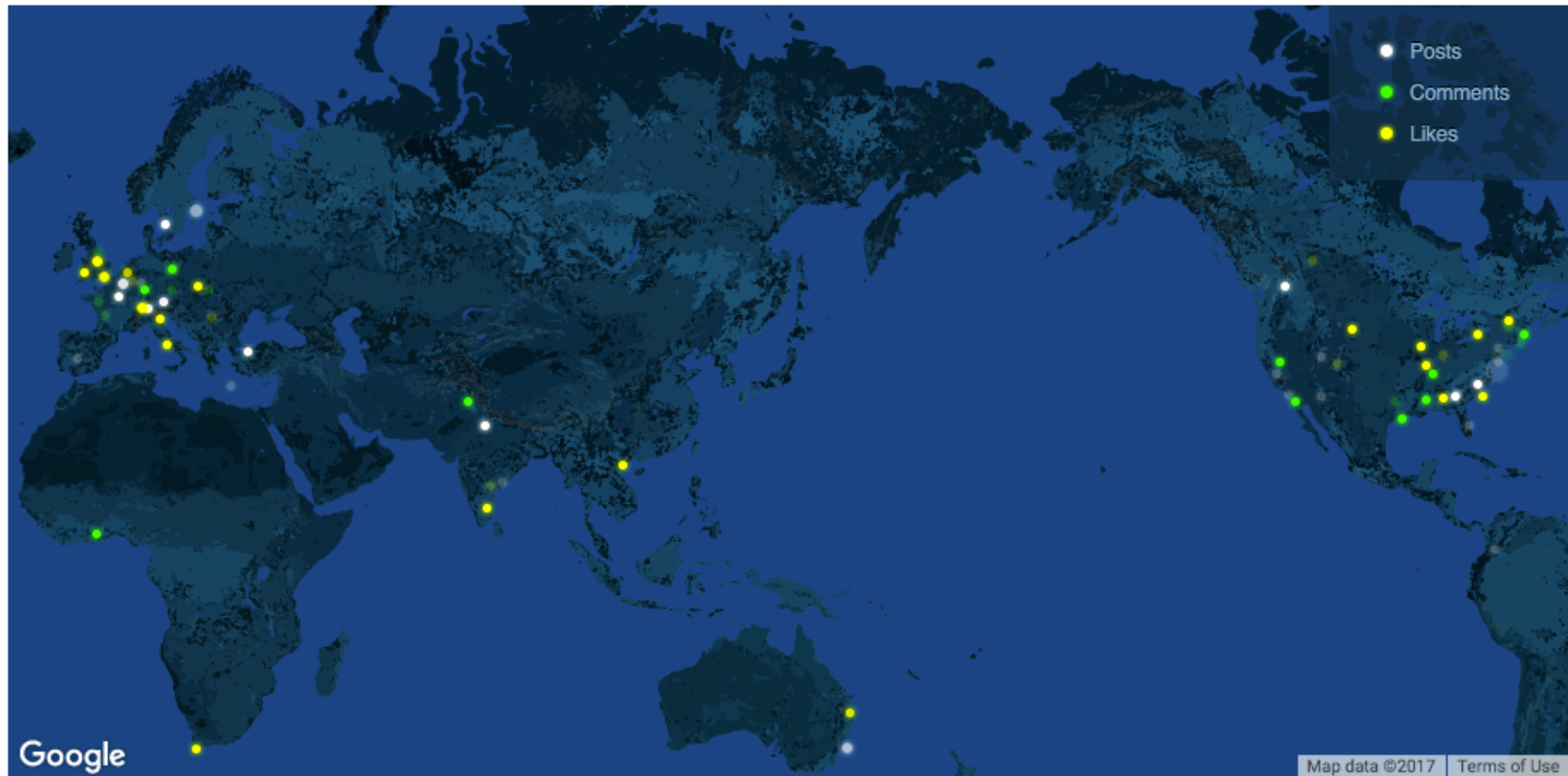
Wordpress stats:

409 Million people view more than 22.4 Billion pages each month.

73.9 Million new posts and 49 Million new comments each month.

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

Why is a Blog Useful?

- **Communicating** with community, family, friends.
- **Enlarging** your circle, telling your story through personal experience, informing the world in your own words 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!*

Group Blogging

To write a blog with a group, you need *Structure* and a *Schedule*. Harpswell will post the blog entries, and provide some writing help. Decide:

1. Structure

- Who is your audience?
- What are both you and your audience interested in? (*Suggestions:* School work, Home life, Music, Local culture, Cooking, Fashion, and Beauty)
- Does each person write, or are there teams of writers?
- What language or languages will this blog be in?
- Who is the **Editor**?
  - *Job*: Refining expression, Consistency of voice and presentation, Fixing grammar and spelling, and Gatekeeping between writers, Harpswell, and their audience.
  - *Must be*: A good writer / composer, detail oriented, very organized, diplomatic.
- Who is the **Photographer**?
  - *Job*: Illustrating her own and others' blog posts.
  - Must have access to a digital camera, or a smart phone with a camera.
  - *Must be*: Creative, excited by form/color, detail oriented, very organized, diplomatic.

2. Schedule

- Frequency of posting: Weekly? Twice Monthly? Monthly?
- Schedule for each person or team to write a post.

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 from Cambodia to read for comparison:
  - http://blog.andybrouwer.co.uk/ (Temples, Books, Films…)
  - http://blueladyblog.com/ (Travel, Food, Films…)
  - http://www.chamnanmuon.com/ (Marketing, Entertainment, Business…)
  - http://www.khmerbird.com/blog/ (Travel, Movies, Books…)
  - http://sumsithen.com/ (Movie Reviews)
  - http://tharum.com/blog/ (Technology, and Coffee)
  - http://www.vuthychour.com/ (Technology, Business, Food…)
  - http://wheninphnompenh.com/ (Travel)
- A consistent publishing schedule, images, and quality writing make your readers want to come back.

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 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 and clear.

- 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.

What to Avoid

There are topics and behaviors you need to avoid as a student blogger on the Harpswell website:

- Do not take other people's words or images without permission. This is *plagiarism* and *copyright infringement.*

- Avoid politics, personal ridicule, vulgarity, fake news, gossip, and too-private information.

- Remember: you are speaking for your school and community and want them to be respected.

What a Blog Looks Like: Outside
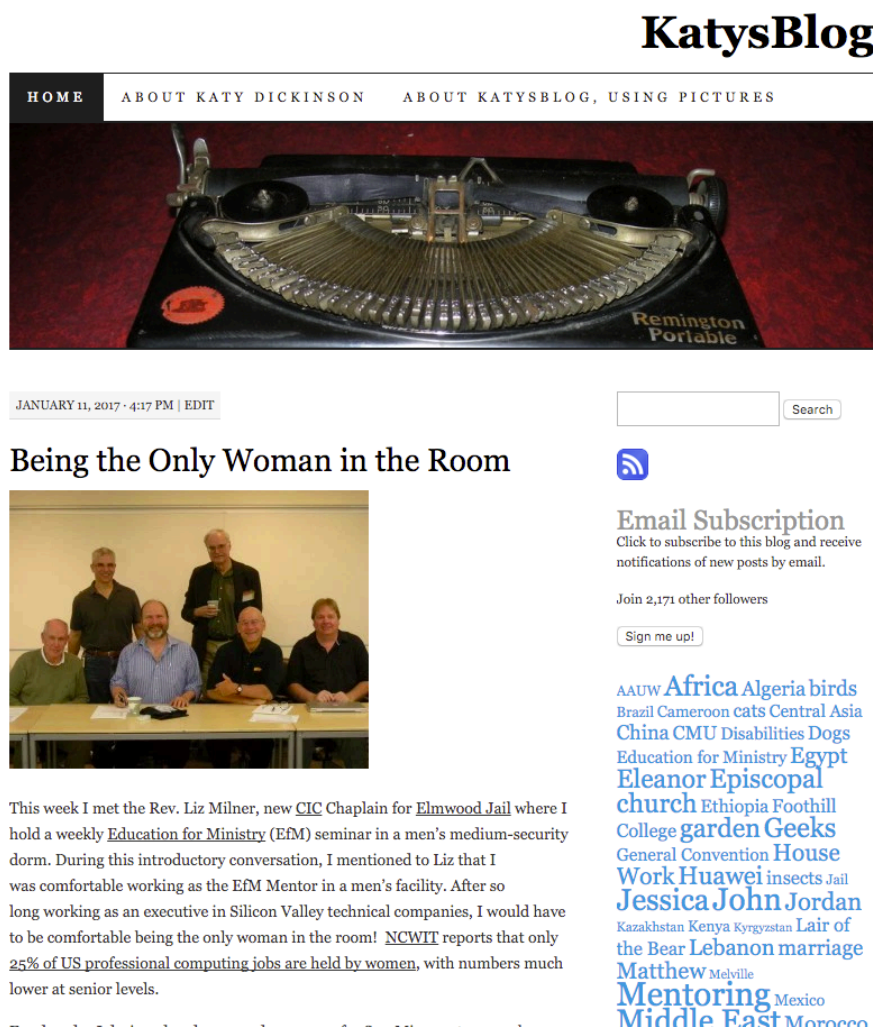
Blog Title: KatysBlog
Pages/Tabs: Home, About …

Home Page Theme Photo

Left: Date/Time of Most Recent Post
Right: Search Bar
L: Blog Title
L: Top Photo in Blog Post
R: Subscription Button
R: Count of Subscribers

L: Blog Content
R: Word Cloud – Most Common Used

A Blog Inside: Visual View
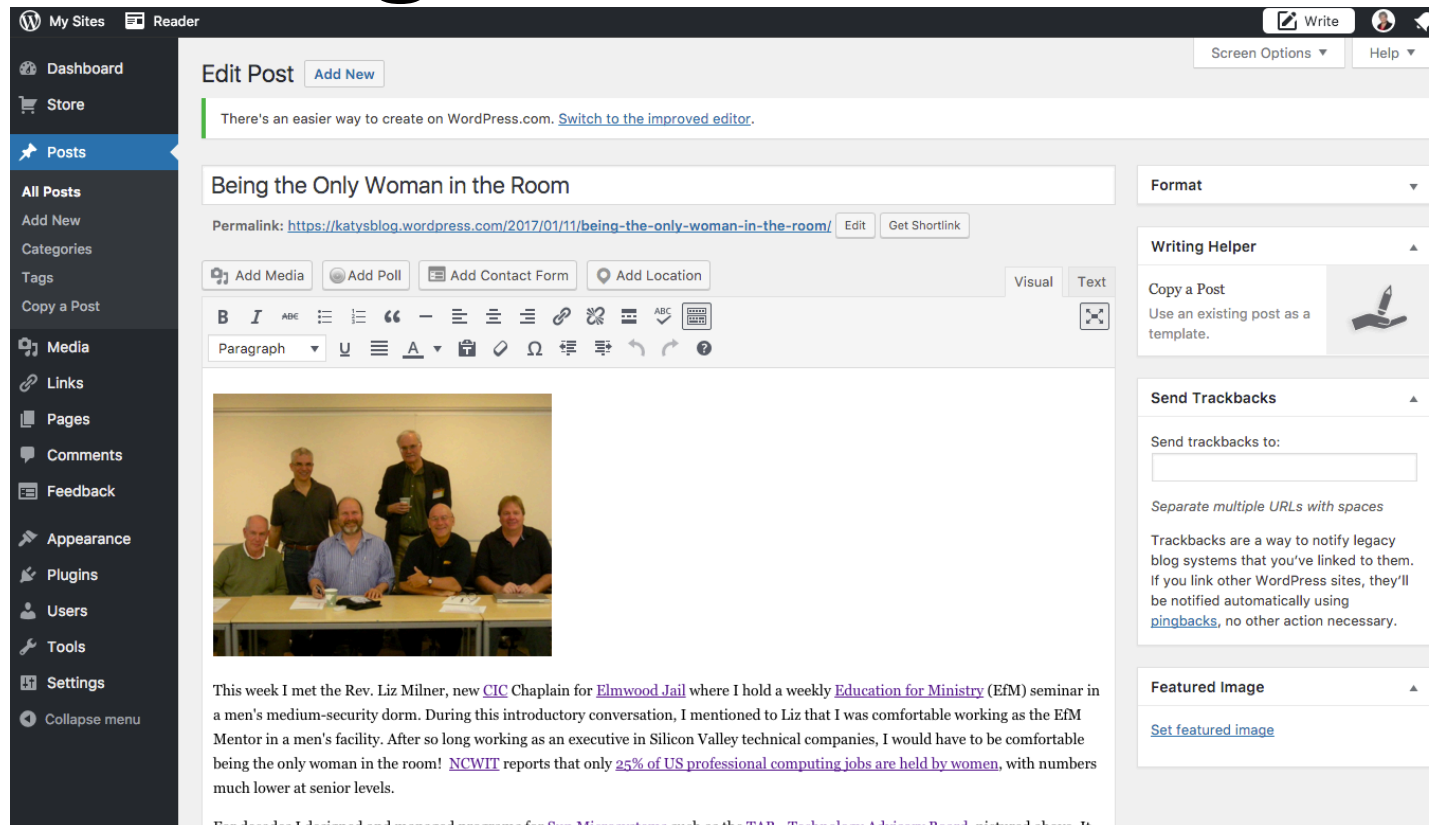
Left: Navigation Bar for Information and Design ("Nav")
Middle: Blog Title
Middle: Permalink, Control Buttons
Middle: Visual of Post Content
Right: Management Tools

A Blog Inside: Text View

Left: Navigation Bar for Information and Design ("Nav")
Middle: Blog Title
Middle: Permalink, Control Buttons
Middle: HTML of Post Content
Right: Management Tools

HTML Basic Tags:
https://www.tutorialspoint.com/html/
html_basic_tags.htm

HTML Cheat Sheet:
http://www.simplehtmlguide.com/
cheatsheet.php

Creating a Blog Post

Now, we will take a live tour of Katysblog, then create a blog post together. Decide:

- Who is our audience?
- What are both we and our audience interested in? Topics to consider:
  - School work
  - Home life
  - Music
  - Local culture
  - Cooking
  - Fashion and Beauty
- What is our blog post's Title?
- What do we want to say?
- What pictures do we want?
- Review and reconsider, edit as needed, then post.

Next Steps

- During the next week, pick:
  - Editor
  - Photographer
  - First Writer or Writing Team
  - Topic for your first post
- Working with your Editor and Photographer, write your first blog post, with illustrations:
  - 2 to 4 paragraphs
  - At least 2 photos
- Send your blog draft to *dickinson@mentoringstandard.com* for feedback.

Questions?

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