



Best Practices for Research, Online Learning & Blogging

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This is us:



<- Katy Dickinson with daughter
Jessica Dickinson Goodman
at GHC16: the
Grace Hopper Celebration of Women
and Computing,
Houston Texas, October 2016

We have traveled together in Qatar,
Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Gaza,
the West Bank, and now Sierra
Leone!

Follow us on Twitter:
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3 Topics

1. Research

- For a uni paper
- To answer a friend's question

2. Online learning

- Suggested MOOCs: FutureLearn, Khan Academy, OpenCurriculum, Coursera, Stanford Online, HarvardX, MITx, Crashcourse, Lynda, Edx
- Wikipedia (How to use and not use it)

3. Contributing to Global Knowledge

- Blogging
- Wikipedia
- Research

Kinds of Research

- **Internet Research:** collecting information from the web
 - Search Engines are the Starting Point: Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc.
 - Wikipedia: free online encyclopedia
- **Offline Research:** looking up information on paper
 - A surprise gift!
 - Journals
 - Librarians/Professors/Experts
 - Local archives and museums
 - Interviews, photographs, paintings, oral histories

Online Research Best Practices

How I Think About Research

1. Start with a real question
2. Gather a wide range of opinions and data
3. Evaluate how much you trust each opinion and understand the writer's point of view
4. Synthesize data and opinions from others
5. Contribute your findings to society

Online Learning

MOOCs:

Massive Open Online Courses

- These online educational sites offer excellent free courses, delivered on the web.
- Some of our favorites:
 - FutureLearn
 - Khan Academy
 - Coursera
 - Stanford Online
 - HarvardX
 - MITx
 - CrashCourse
 - CGPgrey
 - Udemy
 - edX
 - Iversity
 - Open2study
 - NovoEd

Contributing to Global Knowledge: How to Blog

Katy's History as a Blogger

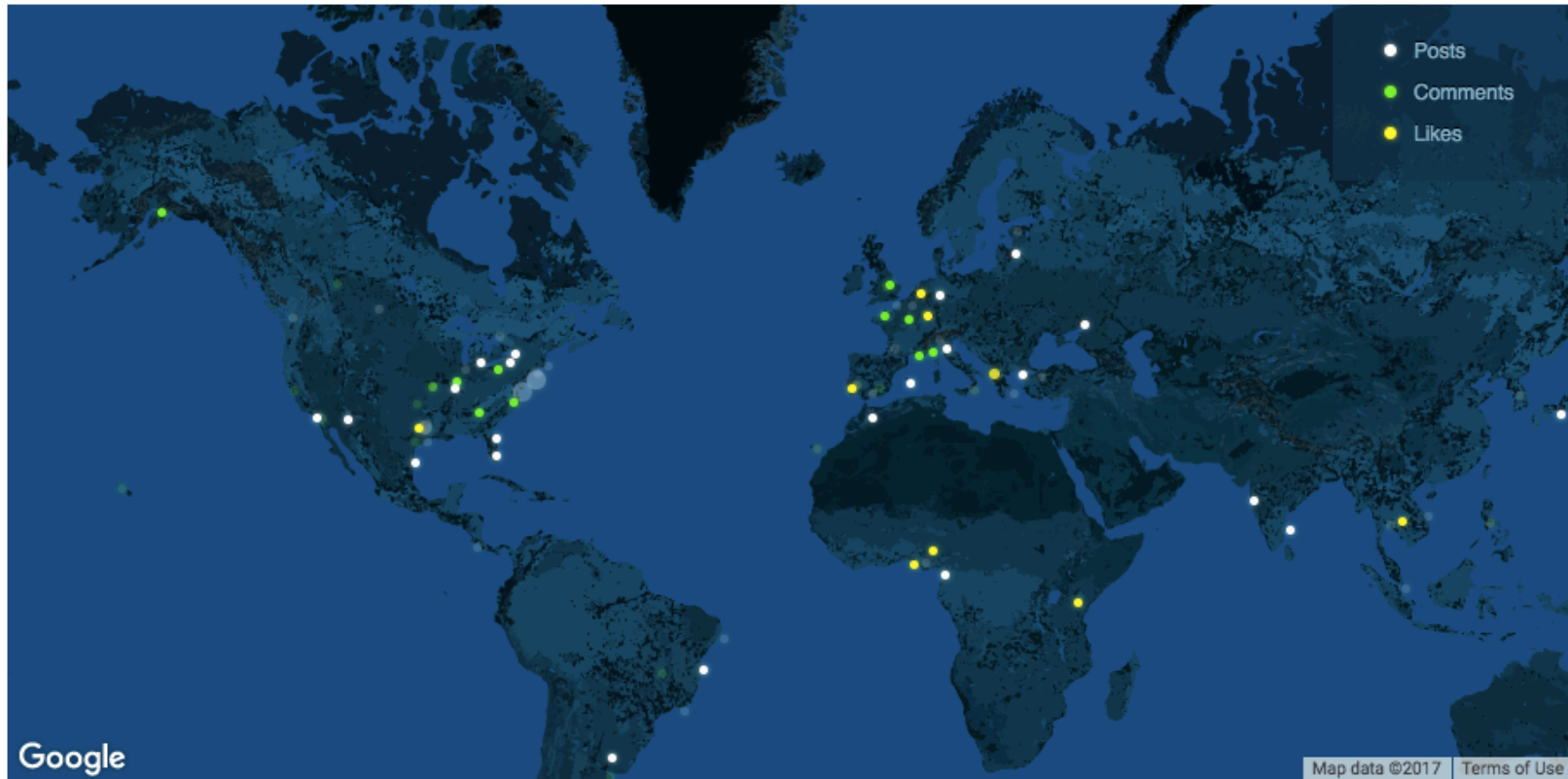
- Writing Katysblog since 2005.
- 1,750+ posts on <https://katysblog.wordpress.com>
- 2,330 regular readers (blog subscribers).
Many more read Katysblog through LinkedIn, Twitter, and Wordpress.
- Contribute articles to other blog sites from time to time.
- Katy's company *Mentoring Standard* also uses Wordpress as a website platform:
mentoringstandard.com
- Jessica is the Web Monarch (technical owner) for Mentoring Standard

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!

A live look at activity across WordPress.com



Wordpress stats:

409 Million people view more than 23.7 Billion pages each month.

83.1 Million new posts and 44.5 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*. Decide:

1. Structure

- Who is your audience?
- What are both you and your audience interested in? (*Suggestions*: School work, Home life, Music, Sports, 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 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 Sierra Leone to read for comparison:
 - Sierra Leone or Bust: <http://emilyinsierraleone.blogspot.com/>
 - Sandra's Latest: <http://sandralako.blogspot.com/>
 - MSF in Sierra Leone: <http://blogs.msf.org/en/staff/blogs/msf-in-sierra-leone>
- 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 to avoid if you want to be a convincing, effective, and respected blogger:

- Do not take other people's words or images without permission. This is *plagiarism* and *copyright infringement*.
- Avoid nasty politics, personal ridicule, vulgarity, fake news, gossip, and too-private information.
- Remember: you are speaking for yourself, your family, your school, and your community. Your readers will judge them by you.

What a Blog Looks Like: Outside

KatysBlog

HOME ABOUT KATY DICKINSON ABOUT KATYSBLOG, USING PICTURES



JANUARY 11, 2017 · 4:17 PM | EDIT

Being the Only Woman in the Room



This week I met the Rev. Liz Milner, new [CIC](#) Chaplain for [Elmwood Jail](#) where I hold a weekly [Education for Ministry](#) (EfM) seminar in a men's medium-security dorm. During this introductory conversation, I mentioned to Liz that I was comfortable working as the EfM Mentor in a men's facility. After so long working as an executive in Silicon Valley technical companies, I would have to be comfortable being the only woman in the room! [NCWIT](#) reports that only 25% of US professional computing jobs are held by women, with numbers much lower at senior levels.

 Search

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[Middle East](#) [Morocco](#)

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

The screenshot shows the WordPress Visual Editor interface. On the left is a dark navigation sidebar with options like Dashboard, Store, Posts, All Posts, Add New, Categories, Tags, Copy a Post, Media, Links, Pages, Comments, Feedback, Appearance, Plugins, Users, Tools, Settings, and Collapse menu. The main content area is titled 'Edit Post' and includes a 'Write' button, 'Screen Options', and 'Help' dropdown. The post title is 'Being the Only Woman in the Room'. Below the title is the permalink: <https://katysblog.wordpress.com/2017/01/11/being-the-only-woman-in-the-room/>. There are buttons for 'Add Media', 'Add Poll', 'Add Contact Form', and 'Add Location'. A rich text editor toolbar is visible with options for Bold, Italic, Underline, Paragraph, Link, Unlink, Text, and more. The post content features a photograph of five men sitting at a table. Below the photo, the text reads: 'This week I met the Rev. Liz Milner, new [CIC](#) Chaplain for [Elmwood Jail](#) where I hold a weekly [Education for Ministry](#) (EfM) seminar in a men's medium-security dorm. During this introductory conversation, I mentioned to Liz that I was comfortable working as the EfM Mentor in a men's facility. After so long working as an executive in Silicon Valley technical companies, I would have to be comfortable being the only woman in the room! [NCWIT](#) reports that only [25% of US professional computing jobs are held by women](#), with numbers much lower at senior levels.' Below this text is a partially visible sentence: 'For decades I designed and managed programs for [Sun Microsystems](#) such as the [TAR - Technology Advisory Board](#), pictured above. It'. On the right side, there are several management tool panels: 'Format' (dropdown), 'Writing Helper' (with 'Copy a Post' button and description), 'Send Trackbacks' (with a text input field and description), and 'Featured Image' (with 'Set featured image' button).

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

The screenshot shows the WordPress 'Edit Post' interface in text view. On the left is a navigation bar with options like Dashboard, Store, Posts, All Posts, Add New, Categories, Tags, Copy a Post, Media, Links, Pages, Comments, Feedback, Appearance, Plugins, Users, and Tools. The main content area is titled 'Edit Post' and includes a 'Add New' button. Below the title is a text area with a message: 'There's an easier way to create on WordPress.com. [Switch to the improved editor.](#)' The post title is 'Being the Only Woman in the Room'. Below the title is the permalink: <https://katysblog.wordpress.com/2017/01/11/being-the-only-woman-in-the-room/>. There are 'Edit' and 'Get Shortlink' buttons. Below the permalink are buttons for 'Add Media', 'Add Poll', 'Add Contact Form', and 'Add Location'. The text editor has tabs for 'Visual' and 'Text', with 'Text' selected. The text editor contains HTML code for a title and an image. The right sidebar has a 'Format' dropdown, a 'Writing Helper' section with a 'Copy a Post' button, and a 'Send Trackbacks' section with a text input field and explanatory text.

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 your audience?
- What are both you and your audience interested in?

Topics to consider:

- School work
- Home life
- Music
- Sports
- Local culture
- Cooking
- Fashion and Beauty
- What is your blog post's Title?
- What do you want to say?
- What pictures do you want to feature?
- Review and reconsider, edit as needed, then post.

5 Other Ways to Contribute

1. Write a book or monograph
2. Submit an article to an academic journal
3. Edit or make a new Wikipedia page. Here's how: *<http://www.cs.duke.edu/csed/wikipedia>*
4. Post about your insights on social media
5. Build a website that answers your research question

Summary

1. Research

You have so many sources, discerning which ones to trust and highlight is your biggest obstacle.

2. Learn Online

You can take courses by professors at Harvard, Stanford, and MIT for free and online to supplement your studies.

3. Contribute

We hope at least 3 of you start blogs on Sierra Leone so we can share them with all of our friends around the world and help them know more about your wonderful country.



Questions?

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