

[\[Up: Robot Wisdom Weblog\]](#) [\[Robot Wisdom home page\]](#)

Weblog resources FAQ

Jorn Barger, September 1999

What is a weblog?

A weblog (sometimes called a blog or a newspaper or a filter) is a webpage where a weblogger (sometimes called a blogger, or a pre-surfer) 'logs' all the other webpages she finds interesting.

The format is normally to add the newest entry at the top of the page, so that repeat visitors can catch up by simply reading down the page until they reach a link they saw on their last visit.

(This causes some minor, unavoidable confusions when the logger comments on an earlier link that the visitor hasn't reached yet.)

Wasn't the name 'weblog' already taken for server-logs/ http-logs/ usage-logs/ logfiles?

Yeah, well... how many different names do they need, anyway???

(And if you can think of a better name than 'weblog', just start using it and see if it catches on. It's all Darwinian.)

Where can I find a listing of weblogs?

So many new ones are being started that no complete list exists.

The most complete lists currently are:

<http://www.eatonweb.com/portal/index.shtml>

http://dmoz.org/Computers/Internet/WWW/Web_Logs/

You can add your own here: <http://www.egroups.com/wdb?method=reportRows&listname=weblogs&tbl=1>

Ranked by how often they're linked from other sites: <http://beebo.org/metalog/ratings/>

Which ones have updated most recently: <http://www.linkwatcher.com/> and <http://subhonker2.userland.com/weblogMonitor/>

A utility that creates a custom [surfmenu](#) of weblogs.

Annotated meta-weblog of weblogs hosted by the Pitas weblog service: <http://web.pitas.com/pitas/>

Annotated lists include: [Daily Web Log](#), [Indirection](#)

Sorted lists include [jig](#)

Sorted by place: http://students.washington.edu/lwinn/bird/map/map_results.html

Feeble [Yahoo](#) category

How is a weblog different from an online journal?

Happily, the line between journal and weblog is perfectly blurred. One of the greatest pleasures of reading weblogs is getting to know their editors.

[Salon on journals](#)

[A journaller who hates weblogs](#)

Are bloggers journalists?

Yes, but they're editors, not reporters, and so far they're amateurs, not professionals. (Slashdot [\[qv\]](#) and Media Gossip [\[qv\]](#) and Matt Drudge being borderline exceptions.)

Weblogs don't replace the function of publishing articles, but they *do* replace the function of publishing tables of contents, which for commercial zines have to hype their content dishonestly, and can't normally highlight good articles in other sources.

Can weblogs compete with major daily papers?

Sure they can. If you read three papers a day, you can easily create a fourth, 'virtual' paper

that's better than any of them.

How many readers do weblogs get?

Here's some informal poll-results, for hits per week:

<100	12
100-500	13
500-1000	9
1000-5000	7
5000-10k	3
10k-50k	5
50k-100k	0
>100k	2

Why do webloggers repeat links they find in other weblogs?

Repeating links is good because no two readers follow exactly the same set of logs, and repetition helps to emphasize the best articles.

Also, webloggers use their archives as a personal index for quickly finding articles they enjoyed in the past.

Should webloggers give credit for borrowed links?

They ought to give enough credit that readers can check out that source for themselves.

Archives:

Most weblogs are archived chronologically. A few re-sort the links into categories: [Robot Wisdom](#), [Haddock](#), [WHump](#)

How long should items be kept on the main page before moving them to the archive?

One day really isn't enough-- you want to save the majority of your readers from ever having to access the archives.

A 32k page is about the limit you want to offer, though, for the sake of readers who visit often.

Is the market for weblogs already saturated, or is there room for one more?

Everyone should keep a weblog, if they have any interest in sharing their opinions with others.

What was the first weblog?

Mosaic's [What's New](#) page was started by Marc Andreessen, I think.

Justin Hall's Links from the Underground was one early prototype [\[history\]](#).

William Gibson [foresaw](#) professional weblogging in 1996:

 Pretty soon I think there'll be people who make a living pre-surfing it for you. There's a real need for that

Dave Winer's Scripting News formalised many characteristics in 1997 by building them into the Frontier scripting environment (at that time freeware), in its 'Newspage suite'.

Robot Wisdom Weblog was the first to use the name 'weblog', in December 1997.

How hard is it to keep a weblog?

The tools to make it easy are getting better and better. Ideally, it shouldn't take any longer than reading the articles and jotting your comments.

Frontier is a bit complex but allows the greatest customisation. (Version 5.0.1 for Mac and/or Windows is still available for free, if you want to try it.)

[Newwwsboy](#) is even rawer-- Perl scripts. And a similar Unix tool called [htnews](#).

Three online tools for simplifying weblog maintenance are [Pitas](#), [Blogger](#), and [Groksoup](#).

Here's an [epinion](#) of Blogger.

Where do you find good links?

The best way to streamline this search is to create your own startpage of your favorite sources. This custom startpage [\[qv\]](#) intro sketches the basics.

You'll want to arrange your own startpage to track the publication schedules of your

favorite periodicals, using the [template](#) provided, plus the online [calendar](#) hosted at eGroups.

But periodicals are just the most obvious source-- newsgroup threads can be linked via Deja.com, searchengine queries can often be linked directly, mailinglist archives are often linkable, etc etc etc. Go wild!

What makes a good comment?

Ideally, your comment should make it clear what you're linking to, and why, so that people can make their own choice whether to follow it or not.

Just saying 'this is cool' will really not be useful to the average visitor.

Other ways of adding value to your links are discussed [here](#).

[Rave](#) for a weblog with NO comments at all.

What about pullquotes?

I don't know why so few weblogs include pullquotes from their articles.

Maybe it's a skill you have to learn, but the liveliest quote is usually pretty obvious to me.

It helps to have a clipboard-extender that allows you to copy the URL and a quote or three without making multiple trips.

Multimedia:

Links to multimedia sites are naturally improved by samples of the images (etc).

Very few logs have started taking advantage of adding illustrations, yet, though if they attract readers to an article there shouldn't be any copyright problems. ([Dan Bricklin](#) raises the bar.)

A webcam on the logger is another possibility that's little seen. The closest is iBoy: <http://aaronland.net/weblog/> Robot Wisdom Weblog was inspired in large part by [AnaCam](#).

It would be nice to see more vidcaps and screen captures.

Live net.radio is another (sound samples being a substitute). ImagineRadio stations are another option.

Some sites object if your 'deep linking' bypasses their advertising or branding.

Interactivity:

[Slashdot](#) sets the standard here. Also of note: [Glassdog](#), [Memepool](#)

Philip Greenspun offers various free services-- [polls](#), [comments](#), and [BBSs](#).

[TakeItOffline](#) offers free hosting for fast, temporary threads.

[MisterPoll](#) offers more elaborate polls.

A free [search engine](#) service for your archives. And a [search-engine](#) that leverages off of three weblogs.

[Stuffed Dog](#) reduces the size of its links-column by highlighting different randomly selected links on each visit.

XML and headline aggregation:

Netscape [\[qv\]](#) and Userland have been pioneering an XML format to make it easy to aggregate headlines (or longer weblog items) called "RSS" (Rich Site Summary).

Carmen's Headline Viewer is a windows app for customising RSS access. Its [homepage](#) includes many related links.

[RSSMaker](#) helps you publish in RSS format.

Arguments against XML [here](#).

Resources on non-RSS methods of parsing websites [here](#).

Weblogs in the media

Early coverage of the weblog phenomena appeared in Eastgate HyTech ([Jan98](#)), Computists' Communique ([Apr98](#)), Village Voice ([Sept98](#)), First Impressions ([Jan99](#)),

Internet World ([Mar99](#)), Slashdot ([May99](#) and [part two](#)), the San Jose Mercury News ([May99](#)), Salon ([May99](#)), Zope ([Jun99](#)), ModemJunkie ([Jun99](#)), Chicago Tribune ([Sept99](#)), Associated Press ([Oct99](#)), New Statesman ([Oct99](#)), Atlantic ([Oct99](#)), InfoWorld ([Nov99](#)), ClickZ ([Nov99](#)), JapanTimes ([Nov99](#))

New York Times on lemonyellow [requires registration](#)

[Weblog reviews](#) from Pigdog. From [Bloat](#)

Why is there such strong negative press, in some cases?

Derogatory/skeptical pieces have appeared in Smug ([May99](#)), [Delusions of Adequacy](#), [Teeth](#), [Stating the Obvious](#)

For me, these sources stink of a panicked establishment/ elite.

The community of bloggers

A public mailinglist for bloggers exists at: <http://www.egroups.com/group/weblogs/>

A Wiki Wiki Web community: <http://www.best.com/~whump/cgi/wiki.cgi>

The closest thing to a weblogs newsgroup is [alt.culture.www](#).

Loggers on logging:

[CamWorld](#), [Bradlands](#), [Windowseat](#), Glassdog [thread](#); eatonweb [interview](#), [scribble](#)

Suggestions

You can submit a new URL or any other suggestion for this page by typing it into the box below. It will instantly become visible to anyone at [this comments page](#). I should get around to checking it out and updating it above within a week or three, at which point I'll delete it from the comments page.

If you want credit, include your name and email (otherwise it's anonymous). You can use HTML but you don't have to.

Sources:

Great links, sadistic design: <http://www.utsler.com/metacubed/>

Links suggested by: Jesse James Garrett, Dan Hartung

[\[Up: Robot Wisdom Weblog\]](#) [\[Site map\]](#) [\[Robot Wisdom home page\]](#) [\(Feedback\)](#)

Search the Robot Wisdom pages:

Robotwisdom.com hosting generously donated by [Prosthetic Monkey Productions](#)

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: The Robot Wisdom Pages include far more text than anyone could be expected to read online, so within the next few months we hope to offer most of it in a **\$20 hardcopy edition**-- some two megabytes of text in a 240-page, large-size format, divided four ways between James Joyce, artificial intelligence, internet culture/ hypertext design, and miscellaneous topics. If you'd like to be informed by email when this becomes available, please [send me email](#) with the words 'hardcopy list' as the subject or in the body. [\[More on the hardcopy edition\]](#)