

Do you blog?

Not just personal home pages, web logs reflect their creators' character.

By Marc Gerard

Blog. It's a strange word, isn't it? Sounds kind of like a race of beings in *Star Wars*, or the name of a punk band. But in fact a blog is something quite different.

Imagine if you could take your journal or diary and make it a web page, complete with your thoughts on life, some guest appearances from your friends, some links to your favorite sites, and anything else you came across. It wouldn't be perfect, it might not always make sense, but it'd be you—honest, unedited, and one day at a time.

Well such a site exists. It's called a blog.

The word is an abbreviation for "web log," and that

about sums it up. A blog is simply a regularly updated site. And while that's a pretty basic idea, blogging has triggered an Internet phenomenon: a different breed of web site that pulls together ramblings, thoughts, facts, links—anything and everything that the web has to offer. For some it's an online journal, for others it's a newspaper or a type of self-portrait.

"Blogging, for me, is a healthy channel to share my frustrations," said Patrick Lao, a student at Wesleyan University and creator of the blog "I've Seen Better Days" (rlao.web.wesleyan.edu). "Some people vent by smoking and drinking, or working out. I vent by blogging."

Vent he does, and so do others on his site. Visit Lao's blog and you'll find anything from words of the day—like falafel—to rantings about his life, to pictures and links. It's random and subject to Lao's mood and interests at the time.

think and hope others will identify with, or maybe disagree and teach me a thing or two in the process."

And it's hard to classify blogs, or pin them down, because they're always changing, said Meg Pickard, creator of the blog "Not So Soft" (notsosoft.com/blog).

"For me, a web log is constructed in the act of updating. As soon as it stops growing and changing, it's dead," said Pickard. "When I write my web log I'm being me, digitally and sequentially. And publicly. My web log is a way of constructing myself in digital form."

Blogging isn't anything new, say its practitioners. And though some have referred to blogging as a new type of journalism, or even a work of art, these bloggers don't think those terms fit.

"Blogging started as a way for people to publish their commentary about specific web sites, or other aspects of the Internet, but it grew so far beyond that so quickly that it's almost impossible to define now," said Rabi Whitaker, a student at Swarthmore

College and creator of "Wockerjabby" (wokerjabby.com). "I don't think blogging as a whole is an art form any more than small talk or political debates are art forms."

"Blogging is, at its core, a whole lot of people talking to each other in public space," said Whitaker. "If anything, it's a gigantic social science experiment, where we are all the participants and observers at once."

So where do you find these bloggers?

All over the Internet, really; type the word "blog" into any search engine and you're sure to come up with more than you can possibly sort through.

The sites you discover or create might not be

Look at these popular blogs to see what it's all about:

Larkfarm.com/weblog_madness.htm

Evhead.com

Sixfoot6.com

Highindustrial.com

Underachievers.com

Electrobacon.com/apathy

To create your own blog, check out these sites:

Blogger.com

Pitas.com

Newsblogger.com

Weblogs.com



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"Blogging is a ritual," said Lao. "A blog is like a Pokemon. It must be fed daily, groomed, and occasionally used to lambaste other people."

The concept means different things to different people. Visit the popular blog "Robot Wisdom" (robotwisdom.com), and you'll find a list of links to quirky sites. Kottke.org, meanwhile, is a popular diary-entry blog. And other blogs fall in between. This is one of the concepts behind blogging, said Jared Dunn, a student at the University of Illinois, and creator of the blog Entropy (students.uiuc.edu/~jddunn/entropy).

"My (blog) is quite aimless, really," said Dunn. "It's just a public venue for me to sort myself out, to get my ideas out there somewhere to connect with people. I don't try to keep any sort of focus at all. I find that rather boring and limiting. I just write what I

slick or regularly updated, but they will feel real. Perhaps that's why people seem to enjoy reading them so much.

"I'm not doing anything unique here," said Dunn. "I'm just spewing out harebrained ideas when the urge hits me. Some people seem to like it, though. Who knows why, exactly?" •