

# Cites & Insights

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## The Front

### Give Us a Dollar and We'll Give You Back Four (2012-13)

Public libraries represent excellent value propositions, quite apart from being at the heart of healthy communities large and small. Public libraries typically yield several dollars in benefits for every dollar in expenditures. Public libraries also need better funding to do better work—and unless they have separate funding agencies, must compete for that funding with other agencies at the local and state level.



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Public libraries need to tell their stories, stories that are distinct for each of the more than 9,000 public libraries in the U.S., to improve and maintain funding and to assure healthy futures. This book won't tell your library's story, but it should provide a resource to help you tell your library's story—specifically, how your library's doing on measurable metrics (compared to other libraries) and why it deserves better funding to do even better..

The book is 262 pages long and consists primarily of several hundred concise tables, designed to help you compare your library to other comparable libraries in several dozen ways. It's based on the

FY2010 Public Library Data Tables released by the Institute for Museum and Library Studies (IMLS) at the end of July 2012. The book covers 8,659 libraries and library districts. (649 were omitted either because they failed to provide enough information to IMLS to be workable, because they have less than a quarter-time librarian, because they have less than \$5 per capita or more than \$400 per capita funding or, in two cases, because they were the only U.S. territorial libraries not omitted for other reasons. Those 649 libraries, roughly 7% of the total, serve less than 2% of the population and circulated less than 0.5% of total library circulation.)

## Availability

*Give Us a Dollar and We'll Give You Back Four (2012-13)* is available in three versions, all with precisely the same content:

- An [\\$11.99 PDF](#) may suit most libraries' needs best, especially smaller libraries. The page size is 6x9", so it should be easy to read on a desktop, notebook, tablet or ebook reader. **There is no DRM:** your library *owns* the book. (If your library or consortium believes patrons might find the book interesting, you're welcome to put it on your ebook server: no contract required. It's your book.)
- A [\\$21.95 trade paperback](#) (cover shown above) is printed on cream 60# book stock and should be an easy book to read and use. This may be the best version for library consultants, larger libraries for whom an extra \$9.96 doesn't make a big difference and the secondary audience of library people who will find the tables interesting on their own.
- A [\\$31.50 casebound hardcover](#) is the most permanent form. I believe any library serving a library school should own this book. It's not only the first book out based on the IMLS FY2010 tables, it offers a distinctive set of comparisons of relatively small groups of libraries.

All three versions are available from Lulu, <http://lulu.com>. Lulu frequently has sales during weekday periods (most often announced on a Monday and good through that Friday), typically offering 15% or 20% off. You might go first to the Lulu home page and look for a coupon code, then search for "Give Us a Dollar" to get to the books. You can buy and download the PDF immediately. The trade paperback will typically take a week or so to reach you; the hardcover may take an additional week.

## The Idea

This book gathers key metrics for public library support and use, arrives at a Benefit Ratio based on conservative estimate of the value of various countable library functions and provides ways for a given library to

compare itself with roughly 510 libraries serving a similar legal service area population (LSA), a few dozen libraries within that group with similar funding, and other libraries in its state. A library can also compare itself to libraries with similar funding across the nation.

All metrics are based on FY2010 IMLS data, but most are derived from that data rather than using it directly. Three taken directly from the data are open hours (for all outlets in a library system), number of personal computers with internet access for public use, and LSA population. LSA is used only as the basis for dividing libraries into 17 roughly equal-size groups of from 492 to 532 libraries each. There's one chapter for each of these groups, a chapter offering numbers for the nation's libraries in general and a chapter offering a subset of metrics for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Other metrics are derived from the raw data:

- Expenditures per capita, dividing the total *operating* expenditures by LSA.
- Circulation per capita and circulation per hour
- Patron visits per capita and patron visits per hour
- Reference transactions per capita
- Program attendance per capita
- PC use per capita and computers per thousand patrons.

The Benefit Ratio is based on circulation, visits, open hours, reference transactions, program attendance and a PC benefit calculation that measures the larger of reported PC use or PC availability. Five out of six of the 8,659 libraries covered have benefit ratios that round to 4 (two-thirds have benefit ratios that round to 5 or higher), so the book's title applies to the vast majority of libraries—even though it's far too conservative, leaving out many less calculable or unreported benefits of a public library.

### *Expenditure Brackets*

I split expenditures per capita into ten brackets based on *actual* numbers; each bracket includes roughly 10% of the libraries. In order to have even-dollar breakpoints (for example, \$17-\$20, not \$16.45-\$19.87), the brackets vary from 8.7% to 11.0% of libraries or 756 to 954 libraries, although six of the ten brackets have 850 to 882 libraries each.

The top bracket is \$73 to \$399.99 per capita (omitting 16 libraries with extraordinarily good funding). The bottom is \$5 to \$11.99 per capita (omitting 144 libraries with exceptionally poor funding).

### *Benchmarks and Budget Tables*

For each metric other than expenditures and LSA, I divided libraries into anywhere from eight to ten brackets, depending on the number of brackets that would yield reasonable cutoff points. For some metrics, it

was feasible to aim for roughly equal numbers of libraries in each bracket. In a few cases, it made sense to have smaller or larger brackets for very low or very high figures (e.g., only 5% of libraries had 100 or more PCs; only 6% had 24 or more circs per capita and only 6% had less than 2 circs per capita).

For each size of library (each of 17 LSA size groups), each of ten metrics has a benchmark table showing the number and percentage of libraries in each bracket, cumulative percentage (always working from largest to smallest numbers), median benefit ratio and median expenditures per capita for libraries in that row. Each row typically represents a few dozen libraries, although that can vary widely.

Each *pair* of metrics also appears in a combined table that shows, for each expenditure bracket, the first quartile, median and third quartile numbers for the metric. The tables combine two metrics purely in order to save space. Again, each bracket—each row—typically involves a few dozen libraries.

The [case study](#) in the July 2012 *Cites & Insights* takes a hypothetical New York library through some of the tables to show how they work. You should be able to see how your library compares with a few dozen or few hundred libraries and, by looking at adjacent rows and chapters, how slightly better funded libraries can offer better and more service. You can also see whether you're doing better or worse than similar libraries on these measures.

The case study is obsolete on a couple of counts, in addition to using older data. The state chapter, which includes four of the ten metrics (to keep the book to a reasonable size), now splits libraries by expenditures per capita rather than size so as to keep it comparable to the other chapters. I've also added more metrics to those shown in the case study.

### *Commentary*

There isn't any—at least not past the first chapter. I deliberately allow tables to stand on their own. If you can't stand numbers, you'll find this book useless and bewildering. (That might also be the case if you like numbers, but that's a different issue.)

I found lots of things interesting as I was building the tables; I don't believe there was a single table that didn't show me something worth noting. But including all the things *I* find interesting would both make the book much longer and also tend to make the book less generally useful to tell *your* story—and much less useful if you're interested in looking at the picture on your own. I plan to point out some interesting items within tables and, possibly more often, across tables and chapters as posts on [Walt at Random](#), as items FriendFeed or Google+ or as Facebook updates. I also plan to bring together some of those observations (and more) in the November 2012 *Cites & Insights*. I'm not exaggerating when I say I can envision finding a thousand points of

interest without too much trouble. I don't plan to write a 1,000-paragraph essay!

One thing you'll find in the comments I *do* write: as in the book, I do not name individual libraries. That's not the point of the book. I'm not naming stars; I'm trying to help a range of libraries tell their own stories.

The more I thought about it, the more I thought having a chapter for every 510-odd libraries made more sense than the usual practice of lumping thousands of smaller libraries into a few brackets and having brackets for far fewer large libraries. I could say that small libraries are equally important to the life of their communities—but that may be wrong. Small communities are likely to have fewer alternative places, fewer bookshops, fewer alternatives in general. Public libraries that serve a few hundred or a few thousand people may be *more* important to the health of their communities. I'm trying to give them equal attention and priced the book—especially the PDF—so they could afford it.

## Audiences and Uses

I hope quite a few public libraries will find this book worthwhile as a way to help tell their—*your*—stories to funding agencies. You'll want to send me email (waltcrawford@gmail.com) as soon as you order the book, giving your library's name, city, state and zip code, so I can send you the metrics that apply to your library: That saves you time when using the book.

Consultants are an obvious audience for the book. There's nothing here you couldn't prepare yourself with a lot of hours in Excel or Access, but I've done that work already. That's only the start of preparing a library's story, to be sure, but it's a start.

Library schools should have this as a detailed resource on what public libraries do.

Some librarians and other library people may find this interesting on its own. I've designed it so each table is small enough to read and evaluate in a minute or two. With one exception, there are never more than eleven rows or seven columns of data, and a typical table takes up one-third of a book page. I believe it's all self-explanatory after you read the first two chapters (and possibly the appendix).

## Give Me a Tenspot...

Give it a try. I believe—I hope—it offers a new and useful resource. If enough of you agree, there will be a new version in another year.

I made a deliberate choice to separate library names and places (except for state) even before I started running the numbers. To date, I haven't even looked up the figures for my local public library or the ones I previously used. I'll only connect a library's name with its metrics when I get emails requesting the metrics for individual libraries.

Is all this worth \$10 (what I get from each purchase, give or take a few cents)? That's up to you, and of course it may actually cost you \$2 to \$20 more. There's a 15-page preview at Lulu, showing the first part of Chapter 1 and most of one of the other chapters. Take a look.

## Words

# Thinking About Blogging, Part 2

This year's edition of THINKING ABOUT BLOGGING began in the [September 2012 Cites & Insights](#). The focus of Part 2 is almost entirely library- and librarian-related.

## Starting, Stopping and Pausing

Selected posts by bloggers (mostly library-related) giving up the ghost—and by some starting up. Many bloggers shut down their blogs or simply stop posting; relatively few do so with explicit, well-thought-out comments. I thought some of these were worth noting.

### *It's Time to Move Along*

That's Jennifer Macaulay on [December 20, 2009](#) at *Life as I Know It*—and this is, indeed, the most recent post on that blog. But not by that blogger. Macaulay began her blog in September 2005 when she started graduate school; she's found it edifying.

However, I made a conscious choice when I began blogging to try to focus my comments on graduate school rather than on my work as a systems librarian. I didn't always follow this internal mandate—after all, I my profession certainly colored my educational experiences and my opinions on various issues. The strictures that I had set became a problem for me when I got close to finishing school. I grew more and more frustrated with my experiences in a distance program and more focused on work because of things that were happening in my library (and in the greater institution). I had several issues that I wanted to write about, but I definitely started discarding the majority of my posts because they were becoming more and more removed from my educational experience. This trend only continued once I actually graduated.

Some of us would redefine the blog (if we had definitions at all). Macaulay decided to “formally put this blog to bed.” But she still found blogging worthwhile:

After much soul-searching, I decided that blogging had been extremely beneficial for me. It had allowed me to participate in larger library

conversations. As an introvert who doesn't feel very comfortable in large groups of unknown people, I don't often participate in conferences or face-to-face gatherings. I found that this blog helped me become aware of myself and my role in the larger library world. I learned not only from my own blog musings, but from many others. Blogging was very good for me, and I do not want to return to the more insular library world in which I was living four to five years ago.

So she started [Just Another Day](#)—but the most recent post on that blog is dated January 30, 2010.

This is both a stop and a start, except that the start appears to have been a false one. I'm not sure what to say about an italicized paragraph about what prompted the final post, since it includes this:

I admit that I was prompted to sit down this week after reading the latest edition of Walt Crawford's [January 2010](#) issue of *Cites and Insights*.

The longest essay in that issue is THINKING ABOUT BLOGGING 4: DECLINES AND ENDS—the last time I discussed blogs shutting down.

*Is my career going to pot because I still blog a lot?*

That's the question raised in this [January 8, 2010 post](#) at *librarytwopointzero*. The blogger cites a post by Brian Mathews:

I wonder if 2010 is the year that many of us academic librarians will shut down our blogs? There were a bunch of us who launched three or four years ago and who posted regularly. It felt sort of like a Gen X movement. However I've noticed a steady overall decline in post quantity in 2009. Walt probably has an algorithm to measure that. I think the probable cause is that many of us were moving past the newbie stage of librarianship and were really starting to sink our teeth into the profession. Now we're just too busy for constant online reflection. Additionally, Facebook and Twitter have evolved to replace the long form narrative (blog posts) in favor of quick bursts of ideas.

Mathews is still blogging—but he moved his blog to the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* blog network, where he's been blogging somewhat more frequently in 2011 and 2012 than he did in 2010.

Then the post gets particularly interesting for a blog with “librarytwopointzero” as a title:

In other ways, many of my ambitions have been dashed and in some of the new web 2.0 technologies (an old phrase in itself) I just detest. I have never understood the thing about twitter, and how many librarians use this more than blogging. I just don't get 147 characters of information....

And e-readers? I just hate them. I used a Sony reader in Germany and I just did not get it. I know I don't have to, but I can see they are the future for SOME users.

This is in a blog with the following in its banner:

I am working in a university library. I therefore wanted to start this blog to talk about libraries and especially library 2.0. I also wanted to discuss web 2.0 with the blogosphere.

What's happened to this blog since January 2010? It was *very* active in 2010 (200 posts), more active than in any prior year. It was less active in 2011, with 90 posts, the last of them on December 6, 2011. Then, after several months' silence, there was this post on April 17, 2012, under the title "Quitting Blog":

I am closing down this blog. Nothing to add. Nothing to say.

### *Why A Blog?*

"librarybob" wrote this on [February 2, 2010](#) at *Quid est veritas?* as the third post on a blog that began in January 2010. Thus, this is about starting rather than stopping. The writer offers a quick opening answer to his own question:

That's easy enough. From *King Henry V*: "Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more; or close the wall up with our English dead."

Followed by a discussion of his earlier writing from the mid-80s to the mid-90s, which I'm told I can easily find—if, that is, I know who "librarybob" is (I guess it would be obvious if I knew high-profile librarians better than I do?), that he'd been writing about library theory and that nobody much seemed to care.

So he stopped writing formal literature, started discussing things on the web, has learned a lot...and concluded:

I've also learned much that dovetails into and refines my earlier theoretical concerns. 15 and more years have passed. It is time to write again.

There were eight more posts in February 2010; eight posts in March 2010; and six in April 2010. Since then, silence.

### *Closed*

Vernon R. (Von) Totanes wrote this [on March 19, 2010](#) at *Filipino Librarian*, about a month after his fifth anniversary post, at which point he'd "hinted that there may not be a sixth anniversary for this blog." In this case there's a specific reason: "I've decided that I really need to shut down this blog and concentrate on writing my dissertation." He hadn't been blogging much anyway, but felt the need to get rid of potential distractions.

He was as good as his word: The next posts are in October 2010, by which point he was presumably sure he'd get the dissertation done on time. I see a dozen posts in 2011 and, so far, one in 2012, in June. Oh, and he did (eventually) finish his dissertation—as he noted on Facebook. He should wrap up his PhD at the University of Toronto this year.

I can think of a lot worse reasons to (temporarily) shutter a blog.



### *The end of the Idol journey*

Andrew Finegan posted this [on April 29, 2010](#) at *Librarian Idol*—three years after starting the blog.

I've explored the library industry, and reflected on my own personal experiences in various sectors. And as much as I enjoy rambling and occasionally ranting about libraries, I feel like I've pretty much said everything that there is to say here.

I've reached my destination. It's not quite where I expected to be, three years ago (although I *would* love to quit librarianship and become a folk singer). However, I feel like I've said everything that needs to be said about being a new librarian.

So was Finegan through with blogging? Not even remotely. He announced a new blog, [Mr. Begin-Again](#), and also joined Libraries Interact, a group blog.

Well...except that the link for *Mr. Begin-Again* now yields *Educational Technology*, with a total of four seemingly anonymous posts from 2012; he's not listed among the contributors at *Libraries Interact*; and he's had some major life changes—documented in occasional posts at *Librarian Idol*, where the latest post (“Returning to the fold...”) is dated April 12, 2012.

### *So, what's going on here? (Independence Day edition)*

Kate Theimer posted this on [July 5, 2010](#) at *ArchivesNext*, partly honoring the blog's first post and explaining why Theimer's “sort of fallen off the grid.”

First, she takes Twitter and other sources *seriously*—so much so that being away for a week made catching up daunting.

Having thousands of references to things you need to look at coming at you every day is exhausting. It leaves you very little time or energy for following up and really thinking about what those changes mean. I'm not asking for anyone's sympathy, I'm just stating a fact.

Second, she wasn't quite sure at this point what she wanted to do with the blog. Third:

And is there still even a place for long serious blog posts any more? Back in October 2008, a *Wired* article advised readers to “pull the plug” on their blogs: “The time it takes to craft sharp, witty blog prose is better spent expressing yourself on Flickr, Facebook, or Twitter.” I disagree with the premise that these other venues are a replacement for long thoughtful posts, and I think anyone who reads Rober Ebert's blog and his tweets would never argue that the short bursts are a replacement for his more substantive thoughtful prose. They are both good but different. Still, when I started this blog I think it filled a need and it's possible that need no longer exists. In an era before widespread Twitter adoption and before many archives and organizations (like SAA and NARA) were sharing

information themselves via Facebook, Twitter and blogs it was harder for most people to seek out information about “what’s new.” Synthesizing and sharing that news may still be a valuable function, but it’s not as necessary as it once was, I think.

Is there still a place for *Wired* and its tendentious overgeneralizing articles? Paul Boutin’s article was stupid when it appeared and hasn’t improved with age. But never mind. Theimer talks about her overburdened life (with 2,300 emails in her Gmail inbox) and concludes that the blog will have “less frequent but longer posts” with other functionality appearing on Twitter.

### *All Good Things Must Come to An End*

Mary Carmen Chimato wrote that on [August 25, 2010](#) at *Circ and Serve* after months of light posting.

Every story comes to an end. I haven’t been posting much at all because life and work have totally trumped blogging. I wish I could have found more time to write about the library-related thoughts that have been swirling around in my head these past few months, but I just didn’t have it in me. For this reason, and another that I shall reveal in a moment, I have decided to end *Circ & Serve*. I really feel strongly about ending something once it feels like it is over, and really with the lack of new content here, this is over.

The other reason behind this decision: I am very pleased to announce that I have accepted the position as Assistant Dean of the University Library at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. I begin my new position there on October 1st. My last day at NCSU Libraries is September 3rd.

There’s more to the post, to be sure. She was true to her word...sort of. On February 21, 2011, there’s one more post, saying she planned to start writing about libraries again at [circandserve.net](#). She hasn’t done a *lot* of posting there—I see five posts, the most recent September 12, 2011—but between the increased responsibilities at UoP and her long planning of a summer 2012 wedding (which has since happened), that may not be surprising.

### *IAG, we hardly knew ye!*

This one was surprising to many of us, I believe: the final post [on August 30, 2010](#) at *It’s All Good*, for several years a sterling example of a group liblog. (It began in 2004 and peaked (with 449 posts) in 2005, continuing strong through 2008 and somewhat less frequently in 2009. There were only seven posts after January 2010.)

Today, we bid adieu to “It’s All Good.” It has been an exhilarating six year run, but now it’s time for us to move our blogging focus elsewhere.

Alice Sneary, Alane Wilson, and I started “It’s All Good” when we hit the road to talk about the OCLC Environmental Scan back in 2004. We used this blog

to share ideas we'd heard, interesting articles we'd seen, or soapboxes on which we wished to climb. Alane says IAG was the first corporate blog in the library world, and I have no reason to disagree with her.

Alane left OCLC a few years ago to return to Canada (\*sniff\*), and Chrystie Hill stepped in as our new writer (yay!). Our colleagues Eric Childress and Matt Goldner also did a few cameos here. But now, we're trying to consolidate places where OCLC-related content might appear, and some of the outliers are being brought into the fold.

The rest of the post notes where the writers will be appearing and gives credit to a couple of people.

### *A Quiet Month in the Garden*

For some of us, “quiet months” (or quarters or years) just happen, without explanation. Not so for Janie Hermann and this [October 8, 2010](#) post at the group blog *Library Garden*.

Actually, it has been almost two months since a new post went up here at Library Garden. We have had slow periods before in our four and a half year history as a blog, but never this slow. Several popular or longstanding library blogs such as It's All Good, See Also and Tinfoil + Raccoon, have closed up shop in the last few months for various reasons. I must admit that lately I have been pondering hanging up my blogging hat, but I am just not quite ready for that step ... I have lots left to say and I like knowing that this platform is here for me when I need it.

Well...*See Also*... didn't close up shop (Steve Lawson continues to post there) and, actually, neither did *Tinfoil + Raccoon*, at least not in 2010 (the most recent post appears July 4, 2011), even though Rochelle Hartman *announced* a shutdown after a year's health-related absence.

In any case, Hermann explains her own absence and says this about the future of the group blog:

As for the future of Library Garden, even though I can't say for certain as I have not had time to ask the blog team, our intent is to keep on keeping on—even if we go through quiet spells every once in a while.

Since October 8, 2010, I see posts in November and December 2010, January, April and May 2011—and a post on August 23, 2011 that seems to be mostly about Twitter. Since then, silence.

### *Still blogging after all these years*

Tara Murray posted this on [October 19, 2010](#) at *DIY Librarian*, after reading my penultimate book on blogging (*But Still They Blog*) and concluding from it that blogs not only aren't dead, they're very much alive, despite having “gone from hot new thing to just another communication channel.”

I don't blog the same way I used to. I don't post as many personal things, mainly because I have other, more appropriate channels (like Facebook) for

those. I don't post as often as I used to, which could be because I have other channels, or could be because I'm busier than I used to be. I don't follow blogs the same way I used to; I'm more likely to find an interesting post via Twitter or Facebook or even a Google search than I am to find it by reading my RSS feeds...

But, there are some things for which my blog is still the best channel. I think (based on the number of comments I get) that more people follow my blog, or find my posts somehow, than did in the early days. I'm used to thinking of myself as a pretty small-time blogger, but I have been around for a while...

For Murray, the blog has allowed for conversations she doesn't otherwise believe she would have connected with—and it's clear to her that her blog has helped her professionally. So this is an “and Going On” post in the midst of all these shutdowns.

Since then? She'll disappear for months at a time, but then she returns: while not frequent, the frequently-worthy posts do continue.

### *18,000 tweets and counting—three years of Twitter and how it has impacted my blogging*

Richard Akerman posted this on [January 30, 2011](#) at *Science Library Pad*, and it's another reflection on how one social networking system affects another online medium. He says of Twitter:

It is not, exactly, a blog killer. But it has dramatically reduced the amount of routine news or links that I post. A bunch of factors led to a dramatic reduction in my blogging. The main one had nothing to do with Twitter - in June 2009 when I posted [the blog is quiet](#) and said it was because of “Reason I can't tell you which will be announced soon” it was because I had planned to move to scienceblogs.com. I was excited about the move. But then there was some minor setup... and I started second-guessing what I wanted to post, I was uncertain about what to say, now that I was outside of my own space. I started a few posts in draft, but I was really hesitant to do a completely new launch, on a new site. Whereas previously I would have had an idea and immediately fired up my browser, I no longer felt that I should just share anything, anytime. (This was nothing to do with ScienceBlogs, they were perfectly welcoming.) And so my momentum drained away, and my energies were all channeled entirely into Twitter. To the extreme that my posts went June 2009... August 2009... July 2010.

Meanwhile, he was tweeting more and more—as a graph in the post shows dramatically.

What have I learned, from this long sejour entirely in Twitterland? First and foremost, I think one loses a lot by not blogging. Twitter can to some extent maintain a presence online, but it can't expand it or make substantial impact. Pretty much all of the opportunities that have come to me from sharing online came from sustained blog posting, from long-form

sharing of my own ideas, not from tweeting or retweeting. If you want to share your ideas in a way that will generate substantial discussion and spark interest in a major way, you have to write in the long form. It's the content creators who are the top of the Internet pyramid—to have an impact you must be writing your ideas, narrating your work. Not just for others, but as importantly, to better understand yourself, to have an online archive of your thoughts and work over time.

There's much more in this fairly long post, well worth reading directly. The conclusion:

For myself, I was happy to have my deep immersion in Twitter for over a year, but I'm happy to be back blogging now as well.

This wasn't a false restart: The blog's been active since then.

### *Getting my blog voice back*

Finally for this section, here's the sole non-library item: Joi Ito, who posted this [on August 24, 2011](#) at his eponymous blog. Tweeting had been working so well and Ito was so busy that “it was easy to stop blogging”—and blog comments seemed to lose their momentum.

However, as the years of not blogging have started to pile up, more and more of my thoughts are no longer online. Back in the day, I blogged nearly everything so giving someone my perspective on any topic required only that I copy/paste a URL into a chat window or an email.

These days I have to write a long-winded reponse or find a video of a talk or an interview. Videos tend to be 80% repetitive and difficult to scan or segment. The interviews are also repetitive and short.

Ito was making what “might be the biggest transition in my life”—to be Director of the MIT Media Lab. He thought the blog would be “a good place to document my thoughts through this transition.”

Since then? Not many posts, but some—seven in the remainder of 2011 and six (so far) in 2012.

What about blogs in general? Technorati stopped doing its comprehensive statistics some time back. As for liblogs...that's an interesting question. (See the next essay.)

## Libraries, Librarians and Blogs

This could be a separate “Libraries” essay, but instead it's the largest section of a roundup that's already included a number of thoughts from librarians. I'm a bit surprised to find that most of these are either from 2010 (or earlier) or 2012. Either I had just given up on library-related blogging during most of 2011 (quite possible!) or I mistagged a bunch of items. Anyway, let's proceed.

### *How are public libraries engaging with Library 2.0?*

That's the title of a Master's thesis at the University of Sheffield written by Sarah Hammond in September 2009 and posted (as an 83-page PDF) [in April 2010](#). It's useful to clarify that by "public libraries" Hammond means public libraries *in the UK*, and that by "engaging with Library 2.0" she means, primarily, blogging, since that's what she investigated.

Beyond that, I don't think I'll comment much. She was one of those who purchased my *Public Library Blogs* book, she used some of my methodology and terminology (and acknowledges that), and she managed to find 20 UK public library blogs, which is 20 better than what I was able to locate during my 2007 survey.

You might find this thesis worth reading.

### *Learning from mistakes in business blogging*

That's a three-part series of short items by Angel Rivera on *The Gypsy Librarian*, posted [October 12](#), [October 19](#) and [October 21](#), 2009. All three were inspired by Josh Catone's *Mashable* post, "[Top 5 Business Blogging Mistakes and How to Avoid Them](#)."

In the first post, Rivera says he doesn't advocate running a library like a business—but "when it comes to blogging, businesses and libraries both worry about the image they convey to the world at large." And without becoming businesses, libraries can certainly learn from them.

The first mistake: "treating your blog like a press center." But a lot of official library blogs *are* dedicated to library announcements—and he's not sure how you get away from that. (Neither am I). He does pick up ways to enrich that function, which I suggest you read in the original.

Part two deals with blogging regularly—and maybe that's more important for a library blog than it is for a liblog.

The library blog is an extension of your library services and a tool for your educational mission. For it to be successful, you have to nurture it. This means posting regularly and consistently. Create good content. Plan writing ideas ahead of time. You don't have to post on a daily basis, but once a month or less is probably too little. Personally, I aim for one post per week on the library's blog. It has not always worked that way, so here is the next piece of advice: don't beat yourself over it. Missed a couple of weeks? Start blogging anew, just take off with it, and work your way up again.

Part two also deals with conversation—the mistake of not allowing comments or requiring registration. Rivera thinks less of a blogger if they don't allow comments or require registration; I don't necessarily think less of them, but think of them as publishing rather than conversing. As for library blogs:

A library blog meant for the public really should not have a reason to disable or close down conversations. Whether academic or public, you should

enable and encourage comments from your community. You should be responsive as well. If someone comments constructively, you should respond thoughtfully. This is how you build a sense of community.

Part three considers the last two items in Catone's list. "Making new content hard to discover" doesn't seem like much of an issue for library blogs, as Rivera says; he offers other ways to make new posts visible.

Then there's the last item: expecting too much, too soon. Yep.

A new library blog is not going to suddenly become an Internet destination. You have to build readership with good, consistent content delivered regularly. You have to invite and nurture conversations. This process takes time, and even then, readership may be low according to raw metrics. However, your library should not be blogging just for the sake of the numbers. Let me blunt: if your director says to you, "let's set up a blog so more people visit our website" or a similar statement, just say no.

Good stuff. No comments.

### *How to Talk About Your Blog in Public*

That's by Ryan Deschamps, *The Other Librarian*, posting on [March 5, 2010](#). He points to various sorts of blogging and podcasting advice—SEO tips, writing "great content," etc.

What seems to be missing is what happens when you talk about your blog or podcast in actual public. But, the way that Twitter and Foursquare seem to encourage 'meet-ups' and the popularity of large-scale unconferences such as Podcamp Toronto make it more necessary to remind bloggers that the people who read your blog are also the people who are going to try and meet with you in public. They may never ever tell you that they read your blog or listen to your podcast, but that does not mean they do not have a dialogue in their head about what they like or do not like about your web presence.

What follows is an interesting case study from Deschamps' own experience—and you'll have to read it in the original. If I'd used a line like Deschamps did in a U.S. gathering, I'd probably never hear the last of it...which is not to say he was entirely in the wrong.

His ideas, without his fuller comments? (My notes, if any, in italics.)

- If someone compliments your blog say "Thank You." *And let it go at that.*
- Respect Your Reader/Listener
- Respect yourself
- There's (Still) a Chasm Between People Who Know and Do Not Know Social Media
- It's all About the Conversation!
- Relax

### *A meta post: on blogging*

Suelibrarian posted this on [June 4, 2010](#) (that's the blogger's pseudonym and the blog name). The post isn't so much about blogging as it is about blogging *as a librarian*—and the possibility that another librarian would shut down her (non-pseudonymous) blog because of work-related issues.

[I]t raises bigger issues for discussion. Those of us participating in this challenge are not necessarily blogging on professional topics. Of those that aren't – do you feel constrained in anyway not to speak out on professional topics? I am not saying that you should professionally blog—just wondering if perceptions of risk to career colour that choice. Of those that do post on professional topics- have you ever felt it threatened your career? And even when it's posts about topics of general interest to the larger profession? I acknowledge it can be foolish to discuss the specifics of a work situation. We do things to distance our personal blogs from our workplace because we can be uncomfortable and not sure of the reaction when we start blogging. I don't have my full name or place of work on this blog but anyone could work those things out. I don't hide the fact that I blog from my management and had these posts auto re-posting to an internal blog as an experiment but didn't actually expect them to find or read them.

A number of (mostly pseudonymous) comments suggest that quite a few library people *do* feel constrained about speaking out on professional topics. That's sad. It's certainly not surprising. (Would I still have a career had I been a lot more circumspect? Who knows?)

### *the personal-professional divide: moving the line*

Kate Davis posted this on [June 7, 2010](#) at *virtually a librarian*. She's never tried to make a clear distinction between personal and professional:

It's not possible to be a workaholic and stop the professional from bleeding across into the personal, at least in terms of time and space—I work outside of work hours, and I work in non-work environments (I always have, but it happens even more now that I'm lucky enough to be able to work from home).

Even with social networking, the line's fuzzy: She tweets about her personal and professional life, but most of her Twitter contacts are professional. The fuzziness is even there with Facebook—but not with the blog:

This blog has always had a clearer purpose in my mind. Although I've been an incredibly sporadic blogger, I've always blogged about professional-related topics here, and I've rarely injected the personal. I didn't start this blog to talk about personal stuff—I started it to talk about professional stuff, and that's how it's always been. This #blogeverydayofjune challenge has changed that for me, sort of out of necessity—30 posts in 30 days is a whole lot of professional topics.



As other bloggers have discussed whether to write about professional topics on personal blogs, Davis faces the opposite issue: She's found it uncomfortable to interject the personal on her blog. But she's decided to move the line, "especially right now while I'm trying to figure out if I'm gonna keep blogging." She quotes Jenica Rogers on changes in your online voice as circumstances change.

The significance? Blogs *do* change—not always explicitly.

Did Davis keep blogging? After the "post every day" thing (which I've always found odd and somewhat counterproductive, but that's me), she disappeared for two months, had eight posts split between September and October 2010, disappeared for seven months, had posts throughout Australia's winter (June-September 2011), disappeared again for three months...and has posted in January, February, March and June 2012. She's kept going—still intermittently, still when she has something to say. Which leads to another Australian post:

*First have something to say...*

What good advice! Why, I could almost [write a book](#) on that topic... This post is by Kathryn Greenhill and appeared [June 8, 2010](#) at *Librarians Matter*. She says that's her cardinal rule of blogging, "which is what makes this 30 posts in 30 days challenge...well... a challenge." She's been blogging less because of life changes and notes others who've been thinking about their blogging (including Kate Davis).

Partly in order to meet the "post every day" challenge, she decided to "change the goalposts" and add personal posts. She also asked readers what they want to read about. That's unusual. She got 13 comments and linkbacks with a range of suggestions.

Greenhill has kept blogging, not all that frequently but with at least one or two posts every month.

*The Library Blog is Dead. Long Live the Library Blog.*

Yeah, I know, cliché, but what the heck, it's a blog post—by Sarah Glassmeyer on June 8, 2010 at *SarahGlassmeyer(dot)com*. She's talking about *library* blogs, not blogs by librarians. In this case, she's talking about the blog at her library (at the time) and her own duties:

Outreach Librarian is in some ways the job title equivalent of "other duties as assigned." For me, that means that I'm responsible for my library's blog and other Web 2.0 endeavors. Like many library blogs, ours is on life support, if not officially dead.

She says why library blogs are dead: While it's dead easy to start a blog, keeping up a library blog isn't so easy...especially if you didn't start with a plan and appropriate resources. What about "long live"?

My first step was to decide whether or not we still needed a library blog. Blogs were one of the original Web 2.0 applications and by the constantly

changing standards of the post-Web 2.0 revolution Internet they almost seem a little old-fashioned. Not to mention the fact that they take a heck of a lot of work. Shouldn't we all just have Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and slap QR Codes on everything?

Her answer is dead on: "No. We shouldn't." She thinks blogs still have a place in libraries. Her solution is "lifestreaming" her library, one of those neologisms I find fuzzy at best. She's shifting the focus of the blog from law news and legal research to "anything and everything related to surviving law school" (the library is at a law school). She describes in some detail what she had in mind.

How did this all work out? Well, the library blog she links to now has a single March 2012 post consisting of the word "welcome"—so something happened along the way. There's no indication of either a blog or the "lifestream" on the library's website. Things happen, and sometimes they don't.

### *Reflections on Blogging*

Miriam Rigby wrote this as a guest post on [June 14, 2010](#) at *ACRLog*. She begins by drawing a comparison I've seen elsewhere but always found silly:

One of the questions posed to our Emerging Leaders team when we took on this project to write posts for *ACRLog* and *ACRL Insider*, was whether blogs were still relevant. Based on my habits, which include subscribing to over 60 blogs through Google Reader, my initial gut reaction was "of course!" But then I started wondering, "are blogs the new Second Life?" No offense to people who find Second Life useful or entertaining, but outside of the realms of librarianship and advertising, very few people I know think it is relevant; some are surprised to hear it still exists or is used at all. And these people are visibly shocked when I tell them of ACRL conference presentations in which Second Life is used, or even discussed. Anecdotes, to be sure—from a small pool of people no less—but noteworthy, I think.

In 2012, I'd be shocked if there are many people *inside* librarianship that find Second Life relevant, but never mind...

She thinks blogs are different, and so do I. She discusses varieties of blogs, probloggers and more. She spends some time suggesting that "anti-blog people" have a narrow and outdated idea of what blogs are, and notes that blogging can be almost anything. And she discusses reasons that Twitter and Facebook haven't eliminated the usefulness of blogs. It's a good discussion, ending with this extremely explicit request for comments:

But what kind of a librarian would I be if I just told you my thoughts and didn't invoke some Web 2.0 participation via blog comments? So, you obviously read some blogs—you are here reading this. But how many blogs do you tend to read? What are your favorites? And do you go directly to

the blogs' webpages, or do you import them via RSS to a reader? And do you think blogs are relevant, or do you know of some newer, cutting edge method of keeping up to date with news and internet memes?

She got a handful of comments and linkbacks—I think I count five comments plus her own response. For a liblog post, that's not bad.

### *Revisiting whether I should or not blog something*

Angel Rivera posted this on [June 25, 2010](#) at *The Gypsy Librarian* after reading other posts about blogging. He ponders four questions, mostly relating to whether a librarian feels constrained when blogging about the profession—and whether they *would* feel constrained if they knew their boss was reading.

Rivera's answers are interesting. Here's the first one in full:

I do feel some need to be restrained. It is not so much that I worry about others in Librarian Blogsville (though I have had at least one visitor who got a little defensive in making a comment. Let's just say I don't always have a good opinion of the powers that be, and said commenter was a member of the powers that be club, and leave it at that. After a while, it's best to just let things go). It is more that I worry about what my current employers may say or think. Even though I keep this blog, as well as my personal one, very separate from the workplace, one never knows when some post might trigger a superior's reaction. As for Librarian Blogsville, I am very much below the big radar as my three readers know. In terms of others in LIS, the only real restraint is trying not to beat dead horses. If a topic has pretty much made the rounds, I avoid blogging about it even when I may have an opinion. For one, the big boys and girls already took care of it. For two, I don't always have the time to reflect and come up with a good response in a timely fashion; after all, some of us do have to work for a living. So at that point, I just don't feel like making the effort. It is not that I lack ideas or opinions. It just seems that by the point X topic has made the rounds, it is already old news.

I don't think Rivera's *that* far under the radar, but that's another issue. He does *not* think his blog would threaten his career: he's not an incendiary blogger by nature although he does have opinions (and generally states them well). He does point out that the major problem in most cases may be if you're looking for another job.

As to how he'd feel about his boss reading his blog: She does, and told him so.

It has not bothered me, and I have not changed the way I blog because of my boss. I came in to my current position as a blogger. Since I do not write on any specifics of the workplace, other than the occasional chronicle of an outreach event for documentation, I do not worry or feel uncomfortable over the boss reading it.

He does feel the need to exercise “some common sense as a blogger,” and it’s hard to argue with that. This is a good discussion, probably worth reading in the original.

### *Reflections on #blogeverydayinjune*

You already know I have mixed feelings about this annual challenge, but it did get some bloggers to think about blogging—as in this [June 30, 2010](#) post at *Suelibrarian*. She didn’t quite make it and “won’t be trying to keep it up,” and offers 28 things she learned in the process.

If you want to read all 28, you know where to go. I’ll quote a couple of them.

1. Posting every day is hard work and time consuming for me. It wasn’t so much that finding the time that was difficult as finding “a” regular time. Mornings are as busy here as in any other house and I like to spend the free morning time catching up on other people’s posts tweets etc. Night times are OK but I am not a night person and tend to go to bed early. I am also not as clear thinking after a hard day’s work. I posted a couple of times at lunch but a lunch 1/2 hour wasn’t long enough for a well constructed post.

3. My first rule of blogging was “have something to say”. Some [days](#) I just didn’t.

You may find that link amusing.

8. We are all complete people and posting everyday can mean having to blur the professional and the personal lines and letting go of self imposed rules.

13. Having a life gives me something to post about. It also give me less time to post.

More gems in the full post.

### *Of Course I Use Blogs...*

That straightforward title comes from Abigail Goben, the *Hedgehog Librarian*, posting [on August 4, 2010](#). She got a call from a library school student taking a course on children’s literature who was looking for information on librarians using children’s lit blogs as part of collection development tools.

Well, yes, of course I use blogs, I said. There are so many good ones out there! She seemed surprised and rather dismayed (at least, that’s how it sounded to me), which made her reaction stick with me. And since this is my own little soapbox, I get to elaborate here.

Which she does. She uses professional journals as her primary resource, but also publisher catalogs, emails, kids and parents making requests...”and I read blogs, browse bookstores, and look for books wherever I can.” Goben calibrates the likely quality of individual book

reviews based on the overall quality of a blog, “which usually is pretty apparent if you read five or ten posts.”

Goben says more, definitely worth reading. The second of nine comments is from the student who called and who notes, correctly, that you could spend days browsing the different blogs, even if you limit that to blogs specializing in children’s literature.

### *How come no LibrarianTopia blogging community?*

That question, raised by John Dupuis in [this September 1, 2010 post](#) at *Confessions of a Science Librarian*, may need a little context. Namely, three new science blogging networks or communities (or whatever you want to call them) opened during mid-2010, in addition to some existing networks. It’s useful to say here that *Confessions* is part of one such network, ScienceBlogs.

I think it’s great—the more the merrier I say. Of course, as networks take up more and more space in the science blogging ecosystem it seems to me that independent bloggers might feel isolated or under pressure or neglected some how. I don’t think that will be a huge problem as independents will continue to thrive in niches large and small and will continue to draw audiences to what they have to say. Ultimately, many of them will have opportunities to join networks and they will continue to choose what’s best for them.

I think that “Of course” is a significant downside. What Dupuis finds interesting is that, as far as he knows, there aren’t all that many similar networks in other domains.

Maybe I’m just ignorant, but is there a thriving ecosystem of accountant blogging networks? MBA? Architects? I don’t think so.

Or more to the point: Why no proliferation of librarian blogging networks?

As Dupuis points out, there are plenty of possible candidates for such networks (he links to [my list of liblogs 2007-2009](#), a *much* shorter list than [the 2007-2010 version](#)).

Sure, there’s not the mainstream interest in library and information science issues that there is in science, which is part of what’s propelling the shifts in that ecosystem. But there is some and certainly there will be a lot of interest in such a project within the library community.

He wonders why professional societies haven’t started “recruiting blogging stables,” why vendors haven’t sponsored communities, why we haven’t self-organized into collectives. (There’s the *LJ* covey, but that’s tiny.) He closes:

I certainly don’t have any answers. I’m not even certain that the questions themselves are that interesting to begin with. Maybe the answer is just, “The library blogosphere is fine like it is.”

What about all of you out there...

- Is this a good idea?
- What would the advantages be to having this sort of community?
- How about disadvantages?
- Would it make it easier for, say, academic librarians to reach faculty and students if we had a blogging community that had a certain critical mass?
- How about other parts of the librarian blogging community?

I think an answer of sorts shows in the comments—or, rather, lack thereof. One blogger says she's a fan of code4lib's blog aggregator and isn't sure there's a benefit to having a specific community. Dupuis provides a response to that:

I think the advantages of a community versus an aggregation revolve around cohesiveness and selectivity. Cohesiveness in that all the members of the community know that they are members and can cooperate or collaborate within that community. Selectivity in the sense that various kinds of diversity within the community can be maintained as well as deciding what kind of optimal size is best.

The rest of the comments? There aren't any in 21 months. Dupuis' blog is fairly widely read among libloggers, I believe. Personally, I had a kind of reverse Groucho Marx feeling: If there was any formal liblog community that I saw as advantageous, I probably wouldn't qualify for it (e.g., a community composed entirely of Real Librarians).

I believe the liblog community has been studied more than most other blogging communities, but I'm (ir)responsible for much of that, although others such as Meredith Farkas paved the way. I believe most libloggers and others in the library field don't care much about the community as a whole. But *is it a community?* There, I'm not so certain.

### *Why I love microblogging*

I have to say this about this post in praise of Twitter and Facebook status updates, posted [September 10, 2010](#) at *Opinions from an OPL*: The post is 755 words—in other words, about 35 times as long as a tweet, and way too long for a status update.

The blogger begins:

I thought about just writing

“Twitter. That is all. #microblog”

and leaving it at that. However, I'm going to assume that some people who read this post may not be twitter users and the aim of this post is not to a) spruik twitter or b) alienate anyone who doesn't tweet.

Spruik? OK, this is another Australian blogger; that's slang for (as far as I can tell) what I'd think of as carney work. The blogger explains hashtags and why they're needed, lumps tumblr, flickr, picasa and MySpace all into

microblogging (really?), quotes the Wikipedia definition at the time...and, wait for it, discusses *blodgeverydayinjune*, that mostly-Australian challenge you've seen mentioned several times already. Well, that, and a followup group microblogging exercise using Flickr, with people posting one picture a day to a special Flickr group throughout August.

So, why do I love microblogging? After the very interesting but very time consuming *#blodgeverydayinjune* (writing, reading and commenting on posts took a lot of time) I have found the microblogging of twitter and the flickr group a much easier way to keep up with professional colleagues. On a personal note, I realised that I have microblogged for years using my Facebook account and that status updates from far flung friends and family are the single best reason to stay as a Facebook user (I just didn't know it was microblogging!). In terms of developing and keeping networks, whether professional or personal, microblogging options are quick and easy. The one-to-many nature of the tools makes keeping in touch with large networks easy.

Quick, yes. Easy, yes. Suitable for actually *explaining* something—such as why she loves microblogging? Not so much. She asks what other people use for microblogging, but there are no comments, only eight backlinks.

### *Whither Blogging?*

Iris Jastram, the *Pegasus Librarian*, wrote this on [September 10, 2010](#). Her blogging frequency declined in the previous couple of years, partly because FriendFeed's library community (primarily the Library Society of the World, LSW, now more than 800 strong) is such a strong conversational outlet, partly because she was sick most of that time.

In that time many of my favorite blogs have petered out, a few have blown up, and a couple people whose opinions I respect a lot have told me that blogging just isn't worth it any more, that they kind of wish people wouldn't keep throwing posts into the void. And for a while I was inclined to agree and acknowledge that it's perfectly likely that people see *Pegasus Librarian* pop up in their aggregators or on FriendFeed and think "Aw man, her again? Doesn't she know she's boring? \*mark as read\*"

But lately I've felt more and more like posting mundane little things here again, and maybe soon I'll start working through a few of the more promising post stubs from the dark period of the last two years. For me, worrying about the death of blogging and worrying about whether anyone cared that I post here seems to have been more tied to my feelings about other things in my personal life than it was to the actual act of posting here. For me, realizing that I care again that I own and archive my thoughts, that I'm ok with this not being a conversation space if conversation doesn't happen, and that it matters more that I have a thinky space for me than that I have one for anyone else—these things are all making me feel less like I'm clinging to nostalgia or that I'm in denial

whenever I post. When FriendFeed dies, I still want to have access to some of my thoughts.

I will absolutely agree that I spend a lot of time reading and writing on FriendFeed that I might previously have spent reading or writing blogs. That's peculiar, because in my opinion FriendFeed continues to be essential partly because it was never very Successful: The librarian community is probably one of the largest communities on the network (which Facebook, to its considerable credit, has not shut down so far). Note "When FriendFeed dies"—Iris is probably as surprised as I am that, nearly two years later, that hasn't happened. Yet.

This is, I think, a great statement and shows why blogging—which will never again be the Shiny New Thing—is likely to continue as a valid personal and professional activity. (Iris is one of those who automatically brings FriendFeed comments on a post back into the post. I commented there rather than directly, noting that I was mystified by people who "kind of wish people wouldn't keep throwing posts into the void." The FriendFeed discussion involves more people and is distinctly worth reading.

### *Library blogging in 2010*

Back to Australia for this [September 12, 2010](#) post by Michelle McLean at *Connecting Librarian*—and she takes off from the [September/October 2010 issue of Cites & Insights](#), a 60-page monstrosity that offered large portions of *But Still They Blog: The Liblog Landscape 2007-2009* for free.

She looked at four specific highlights and commented on them:

- Fewer new library blogs—reached critical mass, maybe we have enough librarians talking about all the different areas of librarianship
- Fewer library blogs—they were taken up with fervour a few years back, but new things have happened (like Twitter) and some people may have said all they have to say, so have moved on
- Longer posts—maybe becoming more about information than about conversation?
- Fewer comments— I think this is because the conversation has moved away from blogs to Twitter and other social networking sites

Having said that, I still believe in the value of library blogs—you only need to look at my feed reader to see that is true. What do you think?

I agree on all counts. Later, she says "this research is valuable and important, so please support it in any way you can." Few people agreed with her, at least if "support" implies fiscal support—the last book in the series has sold ten (count 'em, 10) copies to date.



## *Goodbye RSS; it was nice while it lasted*

Lauren Pressley says she “might be overstating it” in this [September 15, 2010](#) post at *lauren’s library blog*—and I think that’s at most half true.

I’ve been mulling over the idea of RSS lately. You see, I love RSS. As soon as I learned what it was I went around proclaiming its usefulness and told everyone who would listen, “this tool will change your life!” And then, the other day, via Twitter, I learned Bloglines is shutting down. All of a sudden I felt very old fashioned. You see, I quit using Bloglines years ago. But when I started teaching RSS classes, Bloglines was about the only group in business. And now, it’s so outdated and unused that the company is focusing energy and resources elsewhere.

Pressley found that she wasn’t checking Google Reader as often as she used to—that she was getting new items from Twitter or Facebook. She started thinking about how she does or should get stuff, and offers her own The Plan, one that involves Google Reader “for the things I really have to read” and Twitter and Facebook for most everything else. She describes the process she planned to use in some detail.

I still seem to have several hundred RSS readers for *Walt at Random*, and I still use Google Reader every day (but for considerably fewer blogs than I used to have in Bloglines). But I think RSS has declined in a different way: Browsers no longer provide the high-level support for RSS that they did at one time. Specifically, there was a period when most major browsers would show the RSS icon on the address bar whenever the current page had an RSS feed, making it truly trivial to subscribe to something.

That’s gone away. It’s sort of a shame. I think it’s part of the relentless competition to ~~dumb browsers down~~ simplify the user interface. But I can’t entirely blame Mozilla & Friends: Until I was writing this comment, I didn’t think to see whether I could, in fact, *restore* the subscribe icon. Yes, it turns out, I can (it appears on the tab line)—but it’s not quite the same. The old icon was *only* visible, and then a bright orange, when there was a feed; the new one’s always there, as far as I can tell.

## *Reflections: How can you act when you’ve never seen the script?*

This one’s from Nikki, Nicole Snyder Deitmar, posted [December 8, 2010](#) at *eagle dawg*. She notes that she didn’t blog as much in 2010 as she did in 2008 and 2009—but she’s never had a fixed frequency expectation, “because that opens the door to banality and I value both your and my time too much to go down that path.” And it appears that she’s wondering what she *should* be doing with her blog.

There is very recent allowance for blogging in our promotion review process here at work but I know this venue doesn’t carry the same weight as Real Publishing. Eric Schnell reminded me about this in [Are Blogs](#)

[Given Any Weight in Library Tenure and Promotion Cases?](#) I don't know how those of you who both blog AND publish regularly do it. Despite gentle (and not so gentle) encouragement from some of you I'm as scared of Real Publishing as I am of how long ago I graduated from high school.

The downfall of not having to write a thesis for my Masters is that I am absolutely clueless about how to take the ideas I have to produce a journal or other type of article for publication that hasn't already been done or will be done by someone else already in the pipeline by the time it takes for things to come to print.

What can I do to add more value and not just more noise to the blogosphere? I'll post when I have something I consider timely and helpful to share, whether that's several times in one day (haha yeah right) or a few times a month. That means Fridays will settle down. I have ideas that I think need to be channeled into journal articles instead of blog posts but I don't know for sure. I'm looking forward to a few weeks off from work at the end of the year to take the time to even brainstorm all of this a bit and figure out some direction.

I believe her plan is a sensible one for almost all bloggers: Post when you have something you feel it's worthwhile to share, no matter how frequently (or infrequently) that is. It's worth noting that Nikki has continued to blog, having something to say every single month.

### *Writing/Blogging*

Michael Golrick posted this on [December 15, 2010](#) at *Thoughts from a Library Administrator*—and opens with an odd paragraph that tells me he drives a *lot* more than I do:

As I pulled into the parking lot at work today my almost 3 year old car turned 98,000 miles exactly.

As I write this, our seven-year-old car (our only car) is having its timing belt and water pump replaced—because it's seven years old, even though it has something like 34,000 miles on it. Which is neither here nor there. He's using that astonishing mileage indication to discuss writing and blogging in his life.

When he was a library director, he wrote an annual report. Then he became a consortium director (SCLC)—and had to write a *monthly* report and also a monthly newsletter column going out to more than 300 members. “It scared me at first. However, I soon got used to it.”

In that role, and in the column he wrote when he was president of the Connecticut Library Association, he paid attention to what people responded to—and noted that his occasional personal snippet, such as his car (at the time) turning 100,000 miles, got a lot of feedback.

Now, in thinking about the writing thing, it occurs to me that blogging has helped to channel what has become a need to write. It was stirred by my SCLC/CLA experience. What I did not note is that starting with the SCLC job,

and continuing through my next two directorships, I instituted a monthly written directors report. In both of those cases, I wrote the initial part, and then compiled from the reports which I requested from each of my “direct reports.”

Golrick notes he’s not a trained writer and does think about why he writes. (He mentions me—and I’m not trained either, other than a high school class or two, but I’ve been doing a lot of it for a *very* long time, beginning as a newspaper reporter and columnist in high school.)

In so many ways I am a hacker at this writing thing. I know that I am more unpolished as a blogger than I was as a column writer or even as a library director reporting. In all those cases I had editors and someone to review and make suggestions for editorial revisions. At the same time, for me, and many others, this is a great outlet.

Hard to argue with that.

### *Caveat Lector*

No, not the late, lamented blog. This is a post by Daniel Cornwall on [January 30, 2011](#) at *Alaskan Librarian*. He’s aware that some librarians signed up for his blog and felt the need to warn them—thus, caveat lector:

If you’re a librarian who has signed up in the last week, you’re certainly more than welcome to stick around as long as you find this blog engaging or not too annoying to unsubscribe. I thought I should warn you that the title of this blog, “Alaskan Librarian”, refers more to me as a person and less to the subject matter of this blog. That is, this is a blog written by a librarian in Alaska and not so much about libraries or librarianship in Alaska though this does show up from time to time.

He notes the consistently library-like topic, “Three books on...,” a series (usually weekly) where he takes each inhabited community in Alaska and lists three books relating to that community (when he can find at least that many in WorldCat) along with information on the community’s location and climate. That’s a particularly interesting series since most communities in Alaska are very small and not very well known.

Otherwise, “I can go for weeks without mentioning a library related subject.” He tends not to write about his workplace: he likes his job but doesn’t feel the need to chronicle it. Instead, he writes about Alaska (but not state politics), astronomy, photography and some other topics.

If you’re eclectic in your interests, I think you’ll like it here. If you were hoping for the ins and outs of librarianship in Alaska, you’ll need to look elsewhere. You have been warned. Thanks for stopping by regardless of whether you stay.

I'm highlighting this because it's a refreshing post, describing the nature of a well-established blog without boasting, apologizing or second-guessing himself. Need I add that I continue to subscribe?

### *Unfunded*

Ya gotta love the first two paragraphs of this [February 8, 2011](#) post by Abigail Goben, the *Hedgehog Librarian*:

Over a drink, a former coworker told me of his plan to escape corporate web America:

He's going to start a couple of blogs. These he would easily monetize with ad revenue, gain an immediate huge following, and quit his day job.

Sounds like a plan! Assuming, of course, that you're already independently wealthy or have found a nice freeway overpass to live under.

Goben thought about her own blogs, the few blogs she's seen go big "and the far greater number that I find that haven't updated in two to three years" and explained to him her own situation after four and a half years of blogging.

- 1) I'm not writing my blog to make money. That wasn't the intent when I started and while I wouldn't be adverse if someone was interested in hiring me to blog, that isn't the purpose of Hedgehog Librarian.
- 2) The \$2 and change that I might get from Google Ads does not seem worth the frustration of having ads on my site.
- 3) I considered Amazon Affiliates, but I'd rather try to consciously link to indie book stores, World Cat, and author websites for books. Too, Illinois is presently considering changing the rules and requiring Amazon to charge sales tax which would mean they would eliminate Affiliates so that could easily be a moot point.

I had Google Adwords for a while. I believe my traffic is comparable to hers. \$2 and change sounds about right: I never reached Google's threshold to actually send a payment until I explicitly shut down the ads. She notes the costs of running a blog on LISHost (she doesn't spell them out, but says they're "far less than I pay for one conference or annual membership in a national organization"). My costs for *Cites & Insights*, my blog and my personal site are, I think, within \$30 of her costs—and yes, the total of that and domain registration is less than I used to pay for ALA + LITA and a fraction of what a conference costs.

The real costs are time costs, as she notes...

But the benefits outweigh those. My blog isn't particularly well known but my posts are read, I've had some interesting chats different places about them, and it provides me a public space to stand on a soap box when I would like one. It's given me a different place to write, a public place, without assaulting a listserv with my potentially really unwanted opinion.

And for a relatively new librarian, it's been where I could express my views on what's happening when traditional publishing is too slow or might not really have the space for all of us who are commenting on a specific issue. My blog has provided a writing space that I could point people to—having an established blog gave me some credibility for a guest post I suggested last year that led to an article last summer. It is my online presence, giving you an idea of my voice and my opinions.

Funny. I don't think of Goben as a relatively new librarian, possibly because she's been a distinctive voice for quite a while now.

She's thought about full-time blogging...but only as a transition to a writing day job. She's sensible enough not to expect blogging to pay the bills. (If you can get enough revenue from blogging to pay not only hosting bills but broadband costs, you must have a *very* successful blog!)

### *living out loud on a Saturday*

Jenica Rogers posted this on [April 9, 2011](#) at *Attempting Elegance*. She starts by quoting part of a spoken-word piece ending with “cause every tool is a weapon—if you hold it right” and adds:

This blog is my tool.

I'm going to quote the whole next section (she uses dashes to set off sections of this post):

I think of this blog as a small tool. Like, a pocket leatherman. It does lots of stuff, but it's not very big and I can carry it anywhere, and it can't do lots of other stuff because it's not big enough. It's not as good as the really nice multitool my boyfriend carries, and I can't wield it as effectively as he does.

I am not a rock star. I am not One Of The Voices that people automatically listen to. No one calls me to sub in on speaker panels when they have an opening. I don't get paid for this. I do it really sporadically and only when I feel like it. I am just a woman who writes because I like it. This blog is not that big.

And yet it is. I am reminded.

In my world, at least, and while the late lamented Library Leadership Network was in business, Rogers was indeed One of The Voices that knowledgeable people listened to—and I think she still is. She may not be a Rockstar (although I'm not sure of that), but if she isn't, that's to her credit. For that matter, she offers two incidents that belie her modesty, at least to some extent: she's recognized and appreciated.

I've chosen this place. I've chosen this voice. I've chosen to write and to speak and to be heard and to do it with my face and name attached. This is my tool. I don't want to hold it like a weapon. But I will if I have to, and if I find a cause that seems to warrant it. It's not so hard to flip your grip on that wrench and turn it into a club, and even easier to flip your grip on your voice and aim your words.

When I do, I worry about the potential for backlash. Speaking loudly and boldly and with passion isn't always well-received in our profession. In academia. In general. How many people and ideas can I call out and piss off before it becomes Too Many? Or is this simply the right thing to do, and I do it regardless of cost, of recognition, of notoriety because I want to be the kind of person who speaks rather than remaining silent? Is it simply the right thing to do and I do it because someone has to? I wonder. And in the end, today, as I'm serenaded by my feminist folk hero, I can only conclude that this is who I am. For now, I keep talking, using tools and weapons where I can.

She'd like to have more voices in the game. I can only agree. Some voices have been silenced to some extent, and that's a shame.

### *Professionalization, Libraries, and People Who Blog*

I'm not quite sure how I stumbled upon this [March 5, 2012](#) post by Sara at *The World Is Yours*, but thanks to whoever pointed me there. (It's not a blog I'd been aware of—and, given the gap in dates, it's pretty obvious that I was ignoring librarian blogging related posts for most of 2011 and early 2012.)

Sara is (or was at the time) a library school student who cares about libraries and librarianship.

I am also someone who blogs, who writes (on this blog, anyway) about issues of media criticism, literature, education, and yes, the library. On my personal blog, I talk about those things, too, often, just...differently (this is a point we'll come back to, soon enough).

There seems to be a conversation going on in the “librarians and library-affiliated people who also blog” community about whether and how and how much we identify our blogging life with our field, i.e. if we are obligated to blog about our profession the same way we blog about our life, or whether our non-”professional” blogging about topics related to our profession is somehow (sorry, I promise I'll stop using the p-word soon) “[deprofessionalizing](#)” it all.

That link goes to a Rory Litwin post at *Library Juice*, one I deliberately ignored because I'm *not* a professional librarian and Litwin was making what I regard as a truly odd argument—that the library “blogosphere” is helping to deprofessionalize librarianship. It's a long post, calls for a specific view of librarianship, and seems to find it not only offensive but injurious that most posts on liblogs aren't, well, *seriously professional*. Really. Go read Litwin's post if you like. I'm not making this up: He's calling for library bloggers to *primarily* post about the professional literature. And above all, drop all that “personal, trivial” crap!

Sara quotes one paragraph of Litwin's post:

My concern is that this kind of communication that serves to advance our knowledge and skills does not make up the majority of what counts as the

professional communication of librarians in the Web 2.0 era. What I mostly see in the library blogosphere is a mix of celebration of our professional values in a less-than-substantial way; celebration of our pop culture presence; demonstration of our interest in pop culture; a rather immature obsession with our image in the culture; and general personal blogging under the heading of “librarian.” Because the library blogosphere has nearly replaced the reading of journals for most younger librarians, this content has to be seen as the material that now constitutes the self-conception of librarianship for the librarians who read it, education and work responsibilities aside, for ourselves and before the public. As a result of the interests of library bloggers, in a postmodern transformation, the profession of librarianship is being replaced by the signifier of librarianship. The implication for the problem of deprofessionalization is that the library blogosphere is unwittingly abetting it. The claim to professional expertise is slipping through our fingers, replaced by a mere claim to a cultural identity. A claim to a cultural identity doesn’t constitute a claim to professional autonomy, and professional autonomy is what is needed in order to advance the goals of the profession that we all celebrate.

Sara’s immediate reaction was “to disagree, at length and vehemently”—but she stopped, reread the piece, read some other responses and responds. She still disagrees, but says why in a thoughtful manner. I think she exaggerates the extent to which traditional library journals only or primarily serve academic librarians, and she backs off *slightly* from that.

That doesn’t change the fact that, for all intents and purposes, academic journals for librarians are not always places where all librarians and library-affiliated people feel welcomed, served, or supported. In such a setting, where our professions depend on the exchange of information and ideas, where our profession is an especially social, community-focused one, is it so surprising that those of us who do not always feel at home in the professional or academic journals of our field have sought out and found our own ways to talk about our work?

In some ways, a stronger point is in her next paragraph, where she notes that Litwin objects to combining the personal and the professional in a single blog. I find that aspect of Litwin’s post absurd (but then, I’m not a professional librarian), as I do his narrow definition of what librarianship should be—a (fuzzy if narrow) definition that Sara takes issue with.

Her final paragraph:

For those of us who feel excluded from some professional journals or arenas for whatever reasons, semi- and non-professional blogging about our opinions and ideas, our beliefs and ethics, our problems and practices, offers us not only a forum to talk, but also people to talk to. We find each other, online or in other non-traditional spaces, and we share our words and thoughts, and we go out into our world and make change. The people with

whom we interact in our professional lives matter, and are important; we matter, too, both as professionals and as people.

True—but it's also true that a fair number of library folk who *do* publish in the traditional literature *also* write blogs that may blend the personal and the professional. I sense this annoys Litwin.

I'm guessing that the best librarians are whole people, people who don't neatly separate their lives into Personal and Professional. At least that's been true of most of the librarians I've known and respected, a string that goes back six decades. I think it's a false separation, either in life or in blogs. Full disclosure: I've been acquainted with Rory Litwin for quite some time. I admire some of the things he's doing. I disagree with him on some things. That's life.

### *The timestamps are a lie*

We close this section—and the links-and-commentary section of this roundup—with two posts on relatively minor issues that are both worth reading and thinking about. First, there's this [August 24, 2011](#) post by Jenica Rogers at *Attempting Elegance*—engendered by an email from someone “questioning how I got away with blogging on traditionally defined work time.” (Whew. Somehow, it would never occur to me to take on a 35-year-old university library director for actions that might suggest that she doesn't neatly separate 40 hours, specifically 8 to 4 or 9 to 5, during which she's Hard At Work, from all those other hours when her life is her own.)

She offers a polite version of her response:

We have a culture of working 40-50 hour weeks, usually 8ish to 5ish, but that varies by individual and day. So that's what I've been accustomed to, prior to becoming Director—a day that I set myself, based on inclination and workload. I used to work 10-7 a lot. And if I spent an hour blogging during the day, I'd just work a bit later to get the work done—all that matters is that the work get done, not when it gets done.

Blogging, in my eyes, is professional activity. Academic faculty have an obligation to publish, research, and otherwise contribute to the scholarly communication world of their individual field, so my presence, words, and speaking engagements—all linked inextricably to my blog—are professional and necessary. And therefore there is no conflict between doing those things on work time and having it be “work time”. And while I'm no longer academic faculty, I hold myself to those standards, because I run an academic unit, and should be engaged in the work that our faculty are engaged in. It's good for me, and it's proven to be good for the professional community.

There's also the added bonus that sometimes sitting down and writing about the thing chasing around my head for 30 minutes clears my mind to then spend two hours focused on the task I really should be tackling. It's a professional shot of espresso.



Which strikes me as a good answer (and far nicer than the question deserved)—but not, as it happens, a complete one. To wit, nobody sees timestamps for all those working hours that aren't in the "normal" weekday. I can't imagine a library director *not* spending some evening and weekend hours on work-related activities, and Rogers is no exception. She's self-aware enough to recognize that productivity comes and goes, that librarianship isn't (or shouldn't be) an assembly line job.

Oh, and the title. "I write a bunch of things in advance, and schedule them for publication on a staggered schedule that allows them to publish during workdays when librarians are most likely to see them." I'm pretty sure she's not the only one.

Her final paragraph offers a "tl;dr" version for folks with short attention spans:

tl;dr: Blogging is scholarship that cleanses the mental palate, and my timestamps are lies, just like the cake.

I'm tempted to let it go at that—but the second comment is from "R," the person who'd asked the email question, and now says they were *really* asking whether Rogers had encountered backlash for blogging during work hours. The comment's worth reading as well.

### *Blog Awards: You're doing it wrong*

Finally, and perhaps unfortunately, we revisit the troubled world of Blog Awards and Blog Lists, in this [June 19, 2012](#) post by David "Not the Teleread" Rothman on his eponymous blog. (It appears that I mostly *continued* not tagging posts about library blogging for most of 2011 and 2012. Hmm.)

Full disclosure. I received a Gold Star in the 2010 Salem Press Library Blog Awards, and mentioned it once, briefly, on the blog (including the note that Salem Press had misclassified the blog and corrected it when I told them). I know I've been on way too many "best 10" or "best 100" or whatever blog lists on the seemingly infinite series of list-heavy "blog" sites sponsored by, and steering people to, for-profit online education institutions. I've made a point of never acknowledging the latter.

Anyway: David Rothman got email informing him that his blog was the winner in the Special category of the 2012 Salem Press Library Blog Awards. The email included, *of course*, two different ribbons that he could put on his blog. And he thought something was amiss:

Why in the name of the Flying Spaghetti Monster would \*I\* win this B.S. award which exists only to drive traffic to Salem Press? (Note that I'm not linking to their site because I think this award is an even bigger crock than LJ's Movers and Shakers and is designed only to drive traffic to Salem Press.)

Still, I'm baffled. Completely baffled. What are you people THINKING?

In 2012 I put up a grand total of FIVE POSTS. None were important. None were influential.

There's been very little, infrequent, unimportant content...and it ain't getting much use by any available metric.

And I haven't worked in libraries in over a year.

So...why the heck would this blog be recognized? It makes no sense.

He notes the judges he's acquainted with (professionally) and asks them and other judges what they think the award means, why it is meaningful, now nominees and winners are chosen and "why you lend your names to giving it credibility." He says there is "general consensus among library folk" that the Salem Press awards are B.S.; he declines the award; and he says if there's a cash prize it should go to one of the special library bloggers who are deserving and active—notably including a blog by a person he thinks is "no fan of mine."

He got three responses, including a detailed one from Sarah Houghton, one of the judges. She notes that judges received "a (very) short list of blogs in each category" based on nominations through the Salem Press website and were asked to rank their top two in each category and say why they liked the blog. She looked at the awards as "a lifetime achievement kind of thing," so current inactivity wasn't a killer.

Another judge, Brian Herzog, also responded (both judges are Salem Press winners from previous years—and both are, ahem, LJ Movers and Shakers). Herzog gives the Salem Press awards a little more weight because they're nominated by readers and there's also a reader vote.

I don't think there's a right or wrong here. Does Salem Press do the awards (which do come with a plaque but don't involve cash) to get traffic back to Salem Press? Almost certainly, at least to some extent. I've been known to grumble at times about the *Library Journal* Mover and Shaker awards, partly because *LJ* always makes such a point of labeling M&S winners any time they are mentioned in *LJ* stories, consistently Singling Them Out as Special People. On the other hand, I didn't explicitly reject the Gold Star (a kind of consolation prize) from Salem Press. Would I turn down an M&S award? The question won't ever arise, I'm pretty certain.

I do see that Salem Press removed David's blog from its award page—leaving the oddity that there's an honorable mention in the Special Librarian Blog category, but no winner.

That's it. I would apologize for ignoring what were doubtless quite a few significant posts in this area during two long periods...but that ignorance keeps this roundup from being even more interminable.

## Intersections

# The Liblog Landscape: Where Are They Now?

After several years of in-depth studies of librarian blogs, it became clear in 2011 that continuing *The Liblog Landscape* series made no sense, at least not economic sense.

That left a spreadsheet with all the data on the blogs included in *The Liblog Landscape 2007-2010*—and that spreadsheet is a much more complete representation of English-language liblogs than any of my previous studies or than any other source I know of: 1,304 blogs in all (not including blogs that began after June 11, 2010).

As I was preparing the two-part WORDS essay THINKING ABOUT BLOGS, and specifically Part 2 with its emphasis on libraries and liblogs, I got to wondering: Where are they now? And I'd seen hints here and there that people were missing a reasonably comprehensive list of what's out there.

Just seeing whether the blogs were still there and how recently posts had occurred shouldn't be a big deal, since the spreadsheet included URLs. It wasn't. It wasn't even a big deal to recheck 130-odd blogs that were no longer visible to see whether some of them had moved. That's the background: Given the spreadsheet, checking the status of each liblog as of late July 2012 was a matter of a few hours' work.

The results come in two flavors. This essay offers the basic facts: How many have disappeared, how many appear to be moribund (or have officially closed) but are still visible, how recently each blog had been updated and some overall comments on longevity. The second flavor is a new page linked to from [Walt at Random](#) consisting of two lists of hyperlinked liblog names: One for blogs updated sometime within the past year (when checked—that is, sometime after July 30, 2011) that haven't explicitly closed, one for closed and apparently-moribund blogs. Blogs that disappeared entirely aren't in either list. You'll find that list at [waltcrawford.name/liblogs](#)

## 2010 Background

There's no point in repeating longevity graphs for 2010, given that more than 90% of the blogs visible in June 2010 are still visible in July 2012. Here's the quintile table for longevity of blogs as of June 2010, with the textual comments on longevity. Note that the numbers in High, Low and Median are all months—from the first post to the last post as of May 31, 2010.

	Blogs	High	Low	Median	Moribund
All	1,304	142	1	36	22%
Q1	254	142	62	73	7%
Q2	266	61	44	51	11%
Q3	256	43	31	36	16%
Q4	267	30	16	24	28%
Q5	261	15	1	8	48%

Table 1. Longevity quintiles, 2010

Table 1 breaks blog longevity down by quintiles—with slightly varying sizes to break at whole numbers. Let’s break that down—and note what may be the most interesting column, that is, what percentage of blogs in the quintile was moribund (where “moribund” is defined as more than a year since the most recent post) or explicitly closed as of May 31, 2010.

- The fifth of blogs that had been around the longest (from first post to most recent prior to June 2010) had been running from just over five years to more than 11 years, with a median of just over six years. Only 7% of these blogs were moribund.
- Blogs in the second quintile—above average but not in the top fifth—had been around from under four years to just over five, with a median of four years three months. 11% of these blogs were moribund, half the overall average.
- Blogs in the third quintile—“roughly average”—had been around from roughly 2.5 to roughly 3.5 years, with a median of three years. One-sixth of these blogs were apparently moribund, slightly below the overall average.
- For the fourth quintile, longevity ranges from one year four months to 2.5 years, with a median of two years—and more than a quarter of these blogs were moribund.
- Blogs with the shortest lifespan range from a single month to 1.25 years, with a median of just eight months—and nearly half of these blogs were moribund.

There’s a touch of obviousness about the overall conclusion here: Blogs tend to die young.

### *Currency as of 2010*

It may be worth noting the currency of liblogs as of June 1, 2010, to see how that compares to currency now. I used buckets dating back from June 1, 2010—one week, two weeks, four weeks, eight weeks, 13 weeks (the start of the measurement quarter), 17 weeks (essentially 120 days,

the cutoff some analyses use for minimal blog activity), 26 weeks (half a year), 52 weeks (a year), and two special buckets: 99 (more than a year) and Ceased (explicitly ceased).

Table 2 shows currency for the liblog universe in 2010 (missing seven blogs that, for one reason or another, were difficult to measure).

Currency	Blogs	Percentage	Cumulative
1	401	31%	31%
2	128	10%	41%
4	132	10%	51%
8	113	9%	60%
13	60	5%	64%
17	36	3%	67%
26	51	4%	71%
52	79	6%	77%
99	246	19%	96%
Ceased	51	4%	100%

Table 2: Currency for all blogs, 2010

## 2012

The first thing that has to be said is that *I didn't add any newer blogs to the study*. I'd bet at least a couple of hundred liblogs have been created since June 1, 2010—but I didn't go looking for them. This is a quick and easy update on the 2010 study and its universe, not an attempt to determine the current universe. Anyone wishing to make that attempt is welcome to use my lists (linked earlier) as a basis; for a modest sum, I'd even sell you the spreadsheet.

### *They're Gone—Disappeared Entirely*

One liblog seems to have disappeared so thoroughly that it's not even in the spreadsheet—that is, the last line in the spreadsheet is 1,304 (which means 1,303 blogs). Call that an oops.

Beyond that, 1,190 of the blogs had visible posts as of late July 2012—and hadn't obviously been seized and transformed into *entirely* different blogs. That's not bad: 91.3% two years later.

What happened to the other 113 blogs—none of which appear in the online listing, since they're not liblogs or remnants of liblogs at this point?

- Eighty-two just plain disappeared, in a few cases because the blogging platform itself shut down.
- Twelve may still be liblogs—but now require invitation to view: they're private liblogs.
- Eight are reused URLs hosting entirely different content or being held as ad pages.

- Five still exist but are no longer blogs (and don't have blog archives).
- Two are still blogs but now entirely or predominantly non-English.
- The other six are either empty (there's a page, but nothing on it), non-library-related or impossible to include for some other reason.

A few of the disappeared blogs had long lifespans: 11 had at least six years of posts (in 2010—the last time I could check). Seven more had at least five years of posts, 16 at least four years and 14 at least three years. Twenty had at least two years of posts, 24 had at least a year, six at least six months—and 15 were short-lived, with no more than five months between the first post and the last (when checked in 2010, that is).

### *They're Explicitly Closed or Moribund*

Now we're down to 1,191 liblogs that still have posts visible as of late July 2012; all of these are on the web page.

Note that 297 of the 1,304 blogs checked in 2010 were explicitly ceased or moribund (that is, hadn't had a post in more than a year): 23% in all.

For 2012, the numbers are much worse. 405 blogs (34%) weren't explicitly closed but were moribund, with no posts within the previous 52 weeks. Another 54 (4.5%) were explicitly closed.

Of that 54, 33 had already explicitly closed in 2010: They're still closed two years later, still with visible posts. Another 11 blogs that had explicitly closed by June 2010 have since disappeared entirely, which isn't that surprising: Those aren't included in the 54. Perhaps more surprising are seven *resurrected* blogs—blogs that had explicitly closed by June 2010, but have since resumed posting (although in two of the seven cases the blog is moribund, having at least one post since June 1, 2010 but none since July 27, 2011).

Of the remaining 21 blogs marked as explicitly closed by July 2010, three were moribund in 2010 but hadn't explicitly shut down. The rest were all relatively current as of June 2010: 11 had posts within the previous week, three within two weeks, two within a month and two within two months. People close blogs for a variety of reasons; in these cases, the reasons usually appear in the final post.

### *What's Left*

That leaves 731 blogs that began before June 1, 2010 and were still at least semi-active as of late July 2012 (that is, there had been at least one post within the past year and the blog wasn't explicitly marked as closed). That's not bad, all things considered: since there were exactly 1,000 blogs with activity during the previous year in the 2010 study, just over a quarter have ceased or gone quiet in the past two years.

Longevity

	Blogs	High	Low	Median	Moribund
All	1,190	167	1	55	39%
Q1	233	167	82	93	9%
Q2	235	81	64	71	18%
Q3	240	63	48	56	29%
Q4	233	47	30	39	47%
Q5	249	29	1	16	87%

Table 3. Longevity quintiles, 2012

Table 3 breaks down the 1,190 blogs that still had visible posts as of late July 2012 in the same manner as Table 1.

In some ways, this table *should* be predictable—at least for all but the rightmost column. Since 25 months elapsed between the two tests, and only blogs in the 2010 study were included in 2012, you’d expect the high, low and median longevity to be roughly 25 higher for each quintile.

That’s not quite the case. The median overall is only 19 months higher because more blogs ceased or went moribund during the 25 months, and that ripples through the figures to a greater or lesser extent.

I think it’s noteworthy that 233 blogs had at least 82 months of posts—just under seven years—even though 9% of those blogs have gone quiet, and that another 233 have more than five years of posts.

What about that fifth quintile—mostly composed of blogs that are moribund, as you’d expect?

- Ten of the blogs were one-month wonders—in one case deliberately (a blog created for a specific seminar).
- A dozen lasted two months, and another ten three months.
- Twenty-four blogs had four to six months of posts.
- Twenty-two had seven to nine months of posts.
- Nineteen had 10 to 12 months of posts.
- Forty-four had posts spanning a year to a year and a half.

Currency

Table 4 isn’t *entirely* comparable to Table 2, because I omitted the “17” category (four months), adding those blogs into the “26” (six-month) category.

Currency	Blogs	Percentage	Cumulative
1	225	19%	19%
2	94	8%	27%
4	105	9%	36%
8	93	8%	43%
13	56	5%	48%
26	73	6%	54%

52	85	7%	61%
99	405	34%	95%
Ceased	54	5%	100%

Table 4. Currency for all blogs, 2012

The optimistic comment here: Of liblogs that have been around for 25 months or more, 19% still seem to have new posts at least once a week—and more than a quarter have new posts at least once every fortnight. All things considered—including the growth of Twitter and Facebook and the extent to which blogs are no longer Shiny—that’s not bad, even compared to 31% and 41% respectively two years ago.

The pessimistic comment: Fewer than half of the blogs had posts within the latest quarter, as compared to nearly two-thirds two years ago.

### Long-Lived Liblogs

To close this quick update, here’s a list of the liblogs that have or had posts over at least seven years—an impressive span, regardless of the current status of the blog. (This list combines portions of two lists from *The Liblog Landscape 2007-2010*, namely pioneering blogs and long-lived blogs that weren’t old enough to be pioneering.)

Blog.....	Months
ResearchBuzz .....	167
librarian.net .....	159
oss4lib.....	155
Search Engine Showdown Blog.....	143
ResourceShelf.....	138
The Handheld Librarian.....	138
Librarisaurus Rex.....	136
Random Access Mazar .....	134
AnthoBLOGy .....	132
Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog.....	132
The Rabid Librarian's Ravings in the Wind .....	129
EngLib .....	125
infolibre .....	125
BookBitchBlog.....	124
Catalogablog .....	124
Library Banter .....	124
MaisonBisson.com .....	123
eclectic librarian.....	121
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### *A Note in Closing*

Some of the names here may *not* be the same name the blog had throughout its life—just as the online page won't always have either the same name or the same URL that a blog began with.

Whenever I could be reasonably certain that a current blog was effectively a continuation of an earlier one (either because of a forwarding link, an archive including earlier posts or other reasonably good evidence), I included all iterations of the blog in the quick study.

The list of 216 blogs above is, I believe, testament to the continued worth of blogging for a significant number of library people. It's not the

only tool, and for many people it's no longer the best tool—but for people who still have something to say and need more than a few words to say it, liblogs still work.

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## Masthead

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