

## A blog's life

Online personal journals a growing trend, despite potential for causing trouble

By Carrie Pierce  
THE BATTALION

**“Even though a lot of people I know read (my blog), I feel a sense of anonymity because I’m telling it on the Web, and not to someone’s face.”**

— Chris Schock  
senior industrial engineering major

People are changing the way they keep diaries and express their innermost thoughts as the Internet continues to change the way people communicate. Recently, keeping an online journal has become a popular hobby. These interactive Web journals are commonly known as “blogs,” short for “Web logs,” and are spaces online where one can write entries on an ongoing basis of whatever he chooses.

According to Weblogs.com News, the first blog was the first Web site, <http://info.cern.ch/>, the site built by Tim Berners-Lee at CERN. This page, set up in 1992, pointed to all the new Web sites as they came online.

Blogs have become Web sites to the world. Some are collections of memoirs, some daily chronicles, some political rants

and some collections of deep thoughts. According to an essay by Mallory Jensen of the Columbia Journalism Review, the most popular blogging site is Blogger.com, which was launched in August 1999 and quickly became the largest and best known of its kind.

Many Aggies have jumped on the blog bandwagon and begun their own journals.

Vince Mejia, a junior finance major, started his blog as a joke after he noticed all of his friends’ blogs were serious.

Mejia said he likes to goof around a lot on his blog, once even posting a picture of ‘Lil John, joking that he was running for Yell Leader. Mejia said his blog is more of a comic outlet and used to promote his parties, Mejia said.

“I also make up random stories and put funny pictures,” he said. Mejia said that on his blog he also makes fun of other people’s blogs and records funny Internet conversations.

Chris Schock, a senior industrial engineering major, started his blog in May 2001, after he graduated from high school.

“I had a lot of friends from high school doing that,” Schock said. “So I thought it’d be a good way we could keep in touch.”

Schock said his blog is mostly about his daily life and issues that he wants to work out on his own by not discussing in person.

“It’s great to be able to express myself in the way that it allows me

to, and to keep up with friends from back home,” he said.

Ashley Cooper, a freshman environmental design major, started her blog five months ago because her friends said blogging was popular.

“(In it) I can put my feelings into words,” Cooper said.

Mejia said because strangers read it, he doesn’t keep his blog too serious. Blogging can be strange when you look on the list of people who have read your blog, he said, and strangers are on the list.

“Some people read it that I don’t even know,” Mejia said. “I IM-ed a girl who read it, and she’s from Tech. I don’t even know her. She said she was bored and looking through blogs. It was kind of creepy.”

Schock said the same thing has happened to him and that at first it was weird, but after having a blog for three years, he has gotten used to it.

“That’s just how the Internet is,” Schock said.

According to a Perseus Development Corporation survey, blogs have increased from 136,000 blogs in 2000, to 10,300,000 in 2004. Thirty-nine percent of bloggers are between the ages of 20 and 29, and 56 percent of the bloggers are women. Mejia thinks the blogging trend is due to the fact that blogs are like diaries, but more fun because users can include pictures and links.

“Blogging is so popular because people always want to read about what other people are doing,” Mejia said. “People will leave comments or come up to me and say it was funny.”

Cooper said she finds it easier to keep up with an online journal rather than a written one.

“I’m on the Internet anyway, and typing is a lot easier,” Cooper said.

Some students think blogging can become dangerous with the honesty the forum provides.

Mejia said he rarely talks about other people on his blog because he

thinks it is stupid to talk about someone on the Internet, where everyone can read it.

“I have a lot of friends whose blogs are really personal,” Mejia said. “I feel like the Internet isn’t the right place to get personal.”

Cooper said she was once confronted by an ex-boyfriend after posting something about him, which resulted in a bad situation.

“Now my parents even read my blog, so I have to be careful,” Cooper said.

Schock has also experienced some of the consequences of posting personal thoughts on his blog.

“When I broke up with my ex-girlfriend, I’d write things,” Schock said. “It caused a lot of trouble.”

Schock said sometimes he’d use her name, sometimes he wouldn’t,

but both would get him in trouble.

“I figure those things are going to happen,” Schock said, “but I don’t have it for others’ sake. I don’t let it bother me too much.”

Schock said his blog, however, is a skewed view of who he is, and one cannot get a really good view of his true self. He doesn’t divulge his whole personality, he said.

“It helps out that even though a lot of people I know read it, I feel a sense of anonymity because I’m still telling it on the Web, not to someone’s face,” Schock said.

Schock said his blog is also a good archive of how he has grown in the past three years.

“I’ve gone back and read posts. It’s obvious that I’ve changed,” he said.

Dr. Brian Doss, an assistant professor in the clinical psychology department, said some people might start blogs for self-disclosure and to gain attention. If the need for attention gets to an extreme, it is called histrionic personality disorder, Doss said.

“Not everyone who has a blog has that,” Doss said, “but if someone has histrionic personality disorder, they might be attracted to blogging.”

Blogs aren’t limited to just students. Amy Earhart, the coordinator of professional writing and instructional technology in the English Department, is interested in blogs. She is researching them, looking into their rhetoric as well as knitting blogs, ones that are devoted to the art and patterns of knitting. Earhart started her blog out of curiosity and convenience.

“I wanted to start a space to share with friends and family who are not local,” Earhart said.

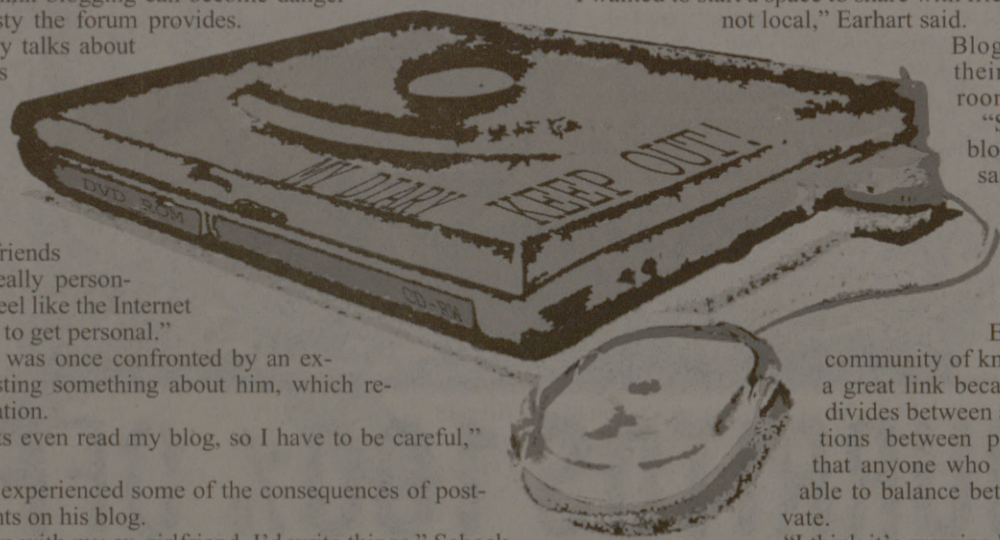
Blogs are even making their way into the classroom.

“Some professors use blogs for classes,” Earhart said.

These blogs are created to have a running discussion of class that students can contribute to as well, Earhart said.

Earhart belongs to a blog community of knitters, which she said is a great link because it breaks down the divides between ages and draws connections between people. Earhart warned that anyone who has a blog needs to be able to balance between personal and private.

“I think it’s growing because it’s very easy to use,” Earhart said. “My mother even started a blog. If she can do it, anyone can.”



GRAPHIC BY CHRISTOPHER JONES — THE BATTALION

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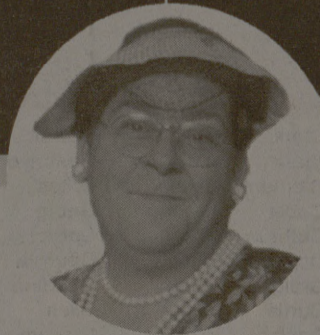
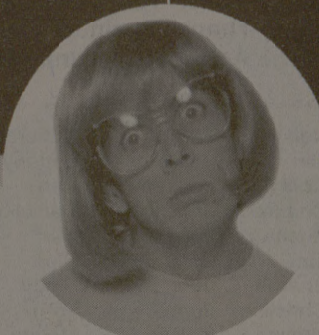
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