

INSIDE: The Global Schoolhouse + Surfing The Intellectuals + Voices + Career

E^{du}cation

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I BLOG, YOU BLOG, THEY BLOG

THE CORPORAL AND HIS STRIPES

Special:

THE GLOBAL SCHOOLHOUSE

Entrepreneur:

DE BONO IDENTITY, DE BONO SUPREMACY

Voices:

NATION IN A RUT
and other opinions



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TEACHERS AND THE GLOBAL SCHOOLHOUSE

Thank you for picking up this copy of Education Magazine's September-October issue. To address what this issue is all about, let me tell you about three local teachers: *Mrs Wong Susan Hua* of Fuhua Primary School, *Ms Chia Chen Chi* of Crescent Girls' School, and *Mrs Goh Tan Ee* of Millennia Institute.

Mrs Wong has been teaching for 41 years. Her younger colleagues, many formerly her pupils, will readily admit that she was their inspiration for embracing teaching as their career choice.

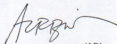
Ms Chia, a mother tongue teacher, has been in service for 22 years. She believes that the key to opening the gate of learning for her students is through care, concern and acceptance of their difficulties. Ms Chia believes that all students can learn and will persevere, holding fast to the belief that "knowledge is essential but values are also critical to the holistic development of a person".

Mdm Goh believes the young can be nurtured in an environment of patience, warmth and care. She views her teacher-mentor role as enlivening the dreams of her students, to let them dance on the sidewalks of life and believe that they can achieve much through diligence and resilience.

Mrs Wong, Ms Chia and Mdm Goh are this year's recipients of the *Caring Teachers Award*. They were accorded the honours by their students.

These are the type of teachers whom parents can trust to give their children the inspiration to learn, to dream, dare and do, and dance in the sidewalks of life: never mind the technologies (blogging, messenger, Tablet PCs, IR plus etc) and the caning syndrome. They will be needed anytime, anyplace, anywhere. They are the teachers who will nurture the likes of Pearl Forss Maria, Zeng Yizhen and Sarah Seow – our inaugural contributors to our readers' opinion section called *Voices* – from young starry-eyed seven-year-olds, to become intelligent, learning and articulate individuals.

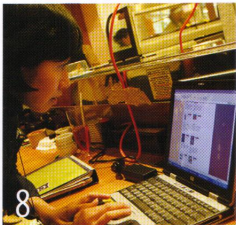
This global schoolhouse of ours is endowed with more teachers like them. Of this we are certain. Which makes Singapore an even more attractive place to get an education.



Al Dizon
Managing Editor

Cover Picture:

Front, L-R: Trant Lai Minh, Johanna Nilsson; Back, L-R: Nico Schaefer, Linnea Thorsell, all from the National University of Singapore. Photo by Cheryl Fan/Education



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I BLOG, YOU BLOG, THEY BLOG

YOUR **DIARY** ON THE NET

BY EDMOND NG



"A couple of hours ago we had a mortar attack," says a U.S. soldier in Iraq in the aftermath of Gulf War 2. "Yesterday a mortar landed near the airfield, and wounded a female soldier. The Mayor of Mosul and two of his bodyguards were killed by terrorists".

The incident quoted above was reported 'live' on location in Iraq battlefields and made its way to the Internet just moments after the infantry soldier penned the above words in his diary on the web. Reports of the incident reached the world through the Internet masses hours before the regular media could distribute it to the traditional media – television, radio and print. All because of weblogs.

A weblog or blog is an online diary made available on the web. It documents the day-to-day life of an individual, which is communicated interactively through the use of pictures, text, feedback, and sometimes sound. It is the personal website of the writer or blogger where diary entries are regularly updated and opened for comments and discussion by other bloggers or people on the Internet.

Topics range from war to entertainment, school work to teachers' experiences, problems to solutions, and others.

Blogging has been around long before the term 'weblog' was coined in 1998 by Jorn Barger, a writer from the United States and editor of an influential early weblog known as *Robot Wisdom*. Over the years, blog has progressively grown from a portal of web links to become a place for individuals to express their thoughts and share about their daily lives.

Unheard Of

Although blogs have become a norm in many parts of the world, it is still relatively new in Asia. In Singapore, blogging is widely known among students and teens, but almost unheard of among adults.

"I don't even know it existed," says 24-year-old artist Sara Ann K. She started blogging only in February this year. Recently, she co-hosted the moblog web site for the Singapore's National Day Parade (NDP) at <http://mblog.ndp.org.sg>.

Over the years, blog has progressively grown from a portal of web links to become a place for individuals to express their thoughts and share about their daily lives.



Sara Ann K: from know-nothing to moblog host.

Another newby, movie director and entertainer Jack Neo, 44, says he even asked his daughter what blogging when he was asked to blog for a cause. "She told me it is something very popular among youngsters these days."

There are some who learned about blogging by accident. Janice Yeo, for instance, first heard about blogging in late 2003 when she saw an advertisement inviting people to join a blogging contest. "I didn't really know what it was but joined for the fun of it," Janice said. In the contest, participants had to blog about their daily lives, personal views and opinions, or practically anything they wanted to talk about. "It was through this blog that we

portray our personalities to the public," says Janice.

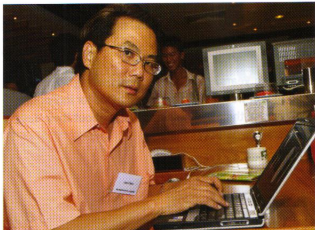
Never Been So Easy

Writing and publishing web pages have never been so easy. The task of web authoring, previously meant only for the IT savvy, is today no longer difficult even for a beginner using the PC or Mac. Like the soldier in Iraq, he only needs to have access to the Internet to be able to update and publish his blog in minutes.

"Just knowing the basics of using a mouse to navigate on a web page is all that is needed to use blogs," says Joanna Tan, 27, a teacher from Deyi Secondary School. "The rest is a matter of trying things out."



Janice Yeo: learned blogging by accident.



Jack Neo: learned about blogging from his daughter.

There's no better way of learning then to experience it on one's own, so, I feel it's the attitude that one has towards learning rather than how equipped one is that is important."

"These blogs have many templates and tools available and you do not have to know HTML codes or javascripts to use it. It's as simple as typing whatever you want to say," explains Ms Yeo.

Blogging and Education

Blogging is not at all difficult and it can be a useful tool for many purposes, including education. Adults, teachers and students interviewed for this article unanimously

agree that it will be a good idea for educational institutions to use blogs as a form of online training resource for students, such as tutorials, frequently asked questions, and discussion forums.

"It would be a unique way to have lessons outside of the classroom, and since more and more people are getting online everyday, it would be more interesting than just sitting and absorbing while in a class, because you get to interact a lot more. In class, we are just too shy to raise our hands," says Ms Ann.

"I think it will help young people to think more creatively and to be able to talk about their ideas more confidently," says Mr Neo.

I have met so many new people through blogging – nice people who have no ill intentions, do not pressure me into meeting them or go out with them, but people who read my stuff and e-mail me words of encouragement, share with me their personal experiences, and offer me friendship with no strings attached

Indeed, the possibilities of what blogs can do are immense, depending on the reasons why people blog. "It's a good way to expose students to read and write. There're many possibilities still untapped," says Ms Tan.

Some people blog to make friends with people of similar interests, while others blog to de-stress or to fight a cause. Eileen Phua, a teacher at Haig Girls' School goes further: "I blog because people can get to know me." And that is why people like Ms Phua and Ms Ann have taken to blogging. "I have met so many new people through blogging – nice people who have no ill intentions, do not pressure me into meeting them or go out with them, but people who read my stuff and e-mail me words of encouragement, share with me their personal experiences, and offer me friendship with no strings attached," Ms Ann says.

Convenient Medium

For many bloggers, the medium is convenient and efficient in recording their thoughts and feelings as most type faster than they write. Ms Tan says: "When in school, I like to spend some quiet time to reflect on what I've done for the moment or the day. It helps a lot if I feel very burdened by something and need to 'offload' it. I find I work more efficiently after I've set myself back in focus and be on task."

"Lots of my friends use it and I think it's really useful," says Darren Ng, 16, a student from Serangoon Secondary School. "It is fun to read about what happens in other people's day too and you can view archives dating back months. It is definitely a good way to know someone better."

Privacy

How about the issue of privacy? Most interviewees say they use their real names for their blogs, and these include teachers and students. Not many of them indicate any concern about using real names for blogging. There are those who feel vulnerable, just like Ms Ann. "At times when I go out, people I don't know seem to know stuff about me. I guess sometimes I forget I publish my diary online which is a public

There's no better way of learning than to experience it on one's own, so, I feel it's the attitude that one has towards learning rather than how equipped one is that is important.



Blogging could have immense educational uses & develop communications out of students.

arena, but I'm grateful that so far I've been lucky and mostly have met really nice and sincere people," Ann adds.

"Personal information of age and e-mail are the maximum information I am willing to release. Anything more should be kept confidential as it can lead to the danger of stalkers and perverts," Ms Yeo warns.

"Of course we run the risk of facing ridicule and criticism from people posting their comments," says Yeo. "But we can deal with it."

Issues about security and fake identities have been discussed on the Internet for a

very long time and till this day frameworks protecting users are still being legislated and studied. To many bloggers, blogging can be a way to express one's joy and peace, a problem and issue to solve, or a place for intellectual exchange. To the soldier in the Iraq battlefield, blogging is about life and death, and about keeping people and family informed of how he is and the situational crises he faces.

It is a place to share problems, fears and thoughts with the hope of getting responses and comments from others that may provide the strength and support to go on.

HOW TO BLOG:
turn to page 56



To the soldier in the Iraq battlefield, blogging is about life and death, and about keeping people and family informed of how he is and the situational crises he faces.



Continued from page 11: BLOGS

Writing your diary or posting journal notes on the web is known as weblog or in short, blog.

Blog has been around for a long time but Internet users in Asia are still new to it. Few Asian adults have heard about blog, but to Gen-Y and beyond, blogging has become a way of life.

To users of blog, it is a great tool for teaching and sharing information, a resource for information exchange. Blog sites can be a place for posting tutorial notes where bloggers can freely exchange their thoughts and share ideas without constraint or intimidation imposed by the external environment, such as a classroom. Bloggers can use nicknames to post their comments without giving away their real identity.

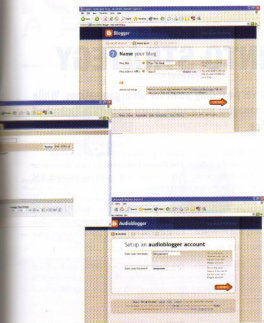
Besides using it for educational purposes, blogs can be a friendly and interactive way to communicate to the masses and to people who share similar interests. Blogging is like chatting online and participating in topical newsgroups. But it is more interactive and provides a personal diary through the use of pictures and sound. In essence, it is the personal website of the blogger, created quickly using templates and updated easily by posting notes for instant automated publishing.

All these sound easy, but in actuality, a bit of HTML coding knowledge is necessary if pictures and sounds are to be incorporated at the blog site.

To become a blogger, a blogging account for the user must first be created, and the easiest way to get it is from <http://www.blogger.com>. Register online by following the three-step process to create an account, name a blog and choose the template for the blog site's look and feel. Once that is done, the next step is to fill up and complete the profile, add in a photograph image and preview how the site looks.

At this stage, the blog site will probably look ordinary and plain because it lacks pictures. That is where some HTML knowledge is useful. Adding an image is easy, but trimming it to fit nicely into site needs a little effort. To add an image, a HTML code similar to the following may be used within the text box to 'Create New Post':

```
<IMG SRC="http://www.pictures.com/image.jpg" width=215  
height=155>
```

The text in "quotes" must be a valid Internet address pointing to the specific image file. To size up the image, adjust the height and width of the image as required.

To add sound, an additional HTML code similar to the following will be required:

```
<embed src="http://www.audiosound.com/sound.mid"
autostart="true" loop="true">
<bgsound src="http://www.audiosound.com/sound.mid">
```

The two statements, "embed" and "bgsound", point the location of the sound file on the Internet and provide support for different Internet browsers.

With that completed, all that remains to be done is to regularly update the blog site by posting new notes and exchanging comments with visitors and bloggers at the site.

Creating a blog site and writing 'personal' notes on the Internet using blogs are not too difficult. Newcomers who need advice or more information on blogging can visit the bloggers' forum web site. ■