BLOGGING: A WEB 2.0 TOOL THAT IMPROVES STUDENTS’ READING AND WRITING

By

Heather S. Hildebrand

An Abstract
of a research paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science and Information Services
in the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development
University of Central Missouri

May, 2014
This literature review examines previously published literature that addresses the blog, a Web 2.0 tool, and the effect it has on students’ reading and writing motivation from elementary to college aged students. The advantages of blogging on students’ reading and writing motivation are examined. According to the research, blogging increased students’ interest in reading and writing. Blogging engaged students longer in reading and writing. Teacher librarians and other educators initiating and using blogs in schools and in the classrooms reported positive results on students’ reading and writing interests. Students read and wrote more deeply as a result of blogging.
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## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The objective of many teacher-librarians and educators is to help students at all age levels become more efficient and effective readers and writers. For many elementary to college aged students the traditional ways of reading and writing instruction have not worked effectively for many students. These students might lack interest in reading and writing.

Interactive Web 2.0 tools are numerous and each one has its own uniqueness, however they all promote reading and writing to some degree or another. This literature review focuses on one of these Web 2.0 tools, the blog.

There are several million bloggers, and as a result of blogs, public conversation has increased. Blogs promote a new way to distribute information outside of traditional media. Teachers are exploring how to use blogs in creative instructional ways in the classroom (Kajder, Bull and Van Noy 1).

For children of the 21st century, technology is like oxygen – a necessary component of their life. Millennial children have an increased use and familiarity with media and digital technologies; and as teachers of these tech-savvy children, it is essential [to] integrate the technology of today into our classrooms. (Lacina and Griffith 316)

Blogging is a relatively easy and helpful tool in supporting reading and writing. Examples of how blogging is used to promote these two literacies are provided in the paper.

Statement of the Problem

Spending more time reading and writing helps students become more effective with these skills. The school schedule is not long enough to incorporate the time needed for all
students to extensively practice reading and writing. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) gathers test results from 65 countries, and ranks them according to students’ proficiencies in reading and other areas. In 2012, United States students ranked close to average in reading; 19 other countries scored higher. The United States has dropped below nine more countries since 2009 when the assessment was last administered (Chappell 1). Students in the United States are also falling short in writing skills. More time devoted to writing has been recommended by the National Commission on Writing. The Commission requested that time spent writing assigned in all content areas be doubled in schools. The Commission recommended that students write more outside of school, and that parents review students’ writing with them (Applebee and Langer 5).

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data, there are new forms and types of publications that combine different media and make use of hypertext. “[F]rom instant messages to webpages to blogs to embedded graphics and videos, these changes are certainly having an impact on students’ writing experiences,” (Applebee and Langer 5). This literature review reveals how one type of media, blogs, can improve students’ reading and writing. This review also describes how teacher-librarians and educators can facilitate the use of blogs in schools across grade levels.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research is to examine how blogs affect the reading and writing practices of students of all ages, from elementary to the college level. It demonstrates how educators can place this collaborative tool in the hands of students. Reading and writing is no longer static. With the blog students are able to create and share their writing, publishing
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Information instantly. Students are able to interact and collaborate with authentic audiences about meaningful topics. Students are able to read or write using highly global and creative methods that heighten interest. Literature presented includes Web 2.0 tools, the impact of blogs on student reading and writing, and reading or writing habits.

Research Questions

This review of literature highlights the blog, a Web 2.0 tool, and its impact on students’ learning, mainly reading and writing motivation. The ideas presented in this literature review proceed from broad information to particular illustrations on how blogs influence both reading and writing separately, and reading and writing jointly. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do blogs impact students’ interest in reading and writing?
2. How can educators use blogs to increase students’ interest in reading and writing?
3. How does using blogs promote collaboration in the classroom and beyond?

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study include the length of the review. Handling such a large volume of material and making it cohesive is challenging. That the blog, a Web 2.0 technology, is noted to have a positive effect on students’ reading and writing motivation neglects to cover fully other Web 2.0 tools that impact students’ reading and writing. Peer reviewed articles and books devoted to blogs and students’ actual reading and writing improvement are not that plentiful.

Peer reviewed articles and books comparing and contrasting the use of blogs’ effects on reading and writing compared to traditional techniques are also limited. This literature review affords the reader a glimpse into the reading and writing habits of students and how blogs
stimulate those habits.

**Definition of Terms**

**Aggregator**: a website that collects related items of content and displays them or links them for display on a selected webpage.

**Black Eyed Susan Award**: a children’s choice award for the state of Maryland. The Black-Eyed Susan Book Award is given to authors or illustrators of outstanding books chosen for the award by Maryland students.

**Blog**: a website that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and hyperlinks provided by the author.

**Blog application**: applications that support the authoring, editing, and publishing of blog posts and comments, with special functions for image management, Web syndication, and post and comment moderation.

**Blogosphere**: all of the blogs on the Internet as a collective whole.

**Class Blogmeister**: a blogging tool created for teachers as an authentic publishing environment to promote the development of effective communication skills in students. Teachers create a blogging account, where they can publish their own articles. Teachers can then set up blogging accounts for their students, for which the teacher maintains publishing control.

**Edublogs**: a blogging tool created for educational purposes.

**iTunes**: a media player, media library, and mobile device management application created by Apple, Inc. It is used to play, download, and organize digital audio and video on personal computers.
LiveJournal: A social media platform that allows members to keep a blog, journal, or diary to share their interests.

Online journal: an electronic journal, also known as e-journals, and electronic serial. These are scholarly journals that can be accessed via electronic transmission or published on the Web.

Playlist: an electronic file containing a list of audio or video files that can be played on an MP3 player or other media player in a particular sequence.

Real simple syndication (RSS): XML-based standard and format used to distribute current news and other frequently updated content appearing on a website.

Web 2.0: the Internet used as a medium for dynamic user-generated content and social networking.

Web 2.0 tools: World Wide Web 2.0 tools designed to promote interaction and sharing.

Widgets: an auxiliary application occupying only part of a webpage.

Wiki: a website that allows collaborative editing of its content and structure by its users.

Wordpress: Web software used to create a website or blog.

Research Design

For this literature review established literature on the topic of blogs and their effect on students’ reading and writing habits were analyzed. Research included how teacher-librarians and educators play a part in facilitating and initiating blogs in schools. Most of the literature was selected from peer-reviewed journals. There was no research performed or new research originated for this study. Articles originated from the following databases: Library and Information Science & Technology Abstracts, Library Literature and Information Science, Library
and Information Science Research, and ERIC. Search terms such as the following were used: “blogs and reading,” “blogs and writing,” “blogs and effect on reading and writing,” “reading achievement in schools in United States,” and “writing achievement in the United States.”

Conclusion

This literature review contains three chapters. This chapter introduced the topic and the research questions that guided this study. The second chapter includes a review of literature with a focus on research on blogs and their impact on students’ reading and writing. The final chapter contains responses to research questions posed in chapter one and a discussion that incorporates conclusions and recommendations on blogs and their influences on reading and writing.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The research in this literature review examines the use of blogs, a Web 2.0 tool, and the effect blogs have on the reading and writing motivation of elementary to college level students. The paper gives examples of teacher librarians and educators effectively facilitating the use of blogs in the school setting. This topic will be discussed in four sections. The first section discusses how blogging facilitates the flow of information and ideas. The second section discusses how blogging improves students’ interest in reading and writing. The third section covers how blogging improves reading and writing. The fourth section presents examples of blogs that engage readers and writers.

Blogging Facilitates the Flow of Information and Ideas

Web 2.0 is the term used for the technological and collaborative and stage of the World Wide Web; a Web that allows for more social interaction among people. Participants can “create, share, publish, and collaborate” (Bergen and Trexler 3) using Web 2.0 tools. Tim O’Reilly coined the term Web 2.0 in 2004 to give emphasis to the Internet’s evolution from a one-way style of communication to a highly participatory environment where applications such as blogs, wikis, photo and video sharing, and social networking sites allow people to place content online, making anyone with an Internet connection a contributor and possible resource (Berger and Trexler 3; Steele and Green 114). The once inactive Web became interactive, a podium where users contribute actively to produce content, exchange information, and converse with others (Borstein and Aharony 90). The Web 2.0 application of focus for this literature review is the blog or weblog. A blog is a Web space that allows a person to share
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opinions and ideas and invite readers to reply in a comment box (Berger and Trexler 103).

Basically blogs are online journals, updated often, requiring no specialized technical knowledge to use; making them a popular way to create digital text (Al-Daihani 117; Crane 5; Hall and Davison 164; Moran 6; Steele and Green 115). Blogs often echo one voice, the author’s; but there can be group blogs, also called collaborative blogs. A collaborative blog allows people in different areas to work together in the same location or in different locations (Poling 14).

Though fairly new, blogging has grown in popularity. For example, Technorati (an advertiser and indexer of blogs), gathered data for a 2008 report by random sampling over 1.2 million Technorati registered bloggers. They reported these findings: over 133 million blogs have been indexed since 2002; 7.4 million blogs were posted in the last 120 days; 1.5 million blogs were posted in the last 7 days, and 900,000 posted in 24 hours (Takahashi 1-2). In 2011, 164 million blogs were estimated on the blogosphere (Treanor 1). The blogosphere refers to all blogs and their interconnections on the Internet (“Blogosphere” 1). In 2011, 68% of bloggers were influenced to blog by other bloggers (Technorati 1). Blogging has become a key feature and significant information tool in the Web 2.0 information world (Aharony 65) and in education.

Blogging supports learning due to its versatile features (Berger and Trexler 103). Blog postings include the bloggers’ thoughts, along with links, videos, photos, widgets, graphics, and podcasts, organized in inverse chronological order. Blogs do not require special coding, so it is not difficult for teachers and students to start a blog. Blogs are rarely password protected to view and thus can serve a large audience. They contain filters for improved searching, allow the
use of tags to describe a topic, and support flexibility in formatting to a varying degree. Blog authors can embed widgets, and RSS (Real Simple Syndication) feeds. RSS feeds allow a reader to subscribe to content that is created by bloggers. For example by using a news feed RSS collector, or aggregator, sites subscribed to are collected automatically (Berger and Trexler 103; Crane 5-6).

There are many hosted blogging services ready for use (Berger and Trexler 107), such as Edublog, LiveJournal, Blogger, Moveable Type, WordPress, Class Blogmeister, and 21Classes (Berger and Trexler 107). Blogger, owned by Google, includes an assortment of templates that allow the novice blogger a selection of graphical themes; light and colorful or dark and petulant (Whisner 561). Edublog is one of the most popular services, hosting approximately 404,021 blogs for students, teachers, librarians, researchers, professors, and administrators (Berger and Trexler 107). Edublog is free and offers 100MB of free space with 20MB of image uploads. All of these hosting tools contain similar features making them easy to learn and use in the classroom. Once a blog a blog service is selected and a blog set-up, authors create blog entries.

Wordpress supplies a blog application (app) for smart phones and tablets that make the daily work of teacher-librarians and students (in and out of school) easily accessible. The blog app permits bloggers to write and update posts, and check comments and statistics from remote places. Activity conducted within the app is instantly accessible to bloggers to make a draft at home and review it later at school (Braun 40).

Interaction using a blog takes place when one “reads a post and responds to it with a comment” (Moran 6). Each blog might contain responses from outside viewers. These comments are a blog’s feedback feature and are the entryway to the discussion that the
blogger wants to prompt through the original posting. The administrator of the blog can edit, approve, or delete comments prior to them appearing on the blog. Inappropriate comments can be deleted throwing them in a ‘trash’ icon located on the blog (Moran 7). This editing feature is helpful in a school environment (Berger and Trexler 105; Crane 5-6).

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Web 2.0 tools place the teacher-librarian and library program in the center of the learning population and place a focus on collaboration and communication (American Library Association 7-8). Teacher-librarians are proficient in understanding how information flows through media; how information and media are created; how information is communicated; diverse ways to share, evaluate, synthesize, and properly use information and media; and how to create knowledge for new audiences using innovative information and communication tools. By steering the Web 2.0 learning revolution, teacher-librarians place access to information and communication tools of the 21st century into the hands of students and school staff (American Library Association 45; Berger and Trexler vii-viii).

This section explores how teacher-librarians use blogging to increase students’ interest in reading and writing. It investigates blogging as a tool that allows easy flow and exchange of ideas for collaboration among students, teachers, and teacher-librarians (Youse, Kenniburg and McCormic 21). It demonstrates how blogging engages readers and writers (Moran 7-8) and presents examples of ways to use blogging in a school environment, strengthening students’ desire to read and write. Evidence shows that blogging fosters students’ purpose for reading and writing (Crane 6; Moran 7-8; Pickworth 1).
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Blogs boost students’ interest in writing. Blogs make available genuine audiences for student writing that include peers, parents, teachers, and other interested people. They create a cross curricular connection and make learning a more social activity (Crane 6). Educator Anne Davis used blogs in a writing program and discovered that students communicated more vigorously after learning the audience appreciated what they said (Pickworth 1). Pickworth states the following about writing and blogs: “With the advent of Web 2.0 technology, new opportunities have emerged to provide audiences for writing. The blog or weblog is one such tool.”

Literacy expert Laura Robb shares the story of a boy refusing to use a traditional method of writing in favor of blogging to write. Robb reported doing a survey of adolescents around the country on writing and discovered adolescents’ negativity on responding to writing prompts. However many adolescents wrote independently. While observing a ninth grade class, Robb noticed a frustrated teacher attempting to get five students in class to write. At the end of the day, Robb met the teacher in the library, and noticed one of the students on a computer reading and typing. Robb crept around the area to observe the student reading and writing excellent responses to a blog. Robb told the teacher, “This child can read very well. He can write. It’s just that he’s not motivated to write from a prompt or read from a book that you’ve chosen all the time” (36). Educators can utilize blogging as a tool for students to use to complete writing assignments and to communicate with peers and with students around the world.

Blogging requires students to follow writing guidelines such as using correct grammar, proper spelling and punctuation, and distinct structure and syntax (Zuiker 1). Whatever the
reason for blogging, knowing the audience and aiming writing at that audience promotes successful blogging and successful writing (Crane 6). An action research project conducted under the International Boys’ School’s Coalition, searched to answer questions such as, how do collaborative writing projects using blogs help boys (from different countries), become strong and confident writers? When asked about the effects of technology on their writing, most boys concurred that the blog affected the mechanics of writing. For example, one student, Andrew, wanted the boys in the United States to see his organized punctuation. The technology (blog) made him double check spelling before sending it off. Most of the boys felt a need to write well for the audience (Pickworth 3).

Emphasis placed on the distinctness of reading and writing blogs promotes interest. Blogs with titles such as *Harry Potter*, *Teachers’ Book Discussion*, *General Topics*, and *First Grade* are all examples of blogs that appeal to people who enjoy reading and writing. These titles increase the appeal of the blogs promoting increased online communication among bloggers with commonalities.

The librarian can collaborate with teachers to establish blogging practices that promote involvement. Examples of activities include looking for ways to engage emergent readers and writers, younger students, English language learners, or striving readers in a school wide conversation (Cowan 25). A librarian-created school community blog opens opportunities for engagement between the librarian and the school at large, increasing and expanding students’ reading and writing practices.
Blogging Improves Reading and Writing

A blog is an effective reading and writing tool. Blogs compliment the skills of 21st century technology savvy students. A blog, like other Web 2.0 tools, is a reading and writing tool. As a result of its popularity and inspiration, it is changing reading and writing (Smith 35). Bloggers have the capability of both reading others’ blogs and interacting as creators on their own (Miller 7). The connection between reading and writing is this; good readers tend to be good writers and vice versa (Crane 5). Blogs bring reading and writing together in opportune ways.

Educators see the benefits of blogs as they collectively inspire students’ reading and writing habits. Educators describe the positive effects of blogging in the classroom as it relates to reading and writing. For example, Will Richardson, supervisor of technology at Hunterdon Central Regional High School in Flemington, New Jersey, an advocate of blogging in education, feels that blogging may possess benefits in relation to increasing students’ reading and writing skills because it engages readers and audiences in a prolonged conversation that leads to further writing and thinking. Blogging provides students the opportunity to read and reflect on writing and thinking. This thinking can occur in real time as the writing takes place. Blogging allows students to continue reading and writing about a topic over a prolonged period of time, maybe a lifetime.

Children of the 21st century use technology with familiarity and ease. Technology is an important part of their lives, and it is necessary for teachers and librarians to incorporate technology in the classroom. Blogging is an easy and helpful way teachers and librarians incorporate technology in their teaching (Crane 11; Lacina and Griffith 316).
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Catherine Poling, a teacher in Frederick County, Maryland, made use of the classroom blog in her 3rd grade class to stimulate reading and writing. Before blogging, students utilized reading response journals as part of their independent work time while the teacher conducted a guided reading group activity with the rest of the class. Handwritten reading response journals permit students to communicate only with the instructor. When the teacher initiated the class blog, students’ enthusiasm and interest peaked significantly. Sharing examples of descriptive writing from self-selected texts, students explained the examples and commented on whether other’s examples helped them apply visualization strategies. This posting extended the topic of the in-class guided reading activity. Students also shared word attack strategies, explaining how various strategies helped them learn meanings of words.

Another type of discussion occurred in Maryland with a class analysis of *Black Eyed Susan Award* nominated books. Students read and rated books separately but then were able to resume and extend the discussion online as they explained what qualities they look for in good books (Poling 13). While blogging, students replied to the messages and to each other. With the blog students were not only interested in the use of technology and the ability to type rather than use pencil and paper, they were also interested in the audience. Students learned from each other as they made connections, asked questions, and drew conclusions while blogging. The activity triggered deep thought and discussion (Poling 12-13).

Wan and Tan reported on a study of English language learners who used blogs to help with reading and writing practice. Blogs offered additional reading for English language learners in the form of online learner journals. Online journals read by learners served both reading and writing purposes in a number of ways. Online resources stimulated participation and
discussion, encouraged a process writing approach, created a portfolio of written work, and helped to build a closer relationship between learners in a large class. The versatility of blogs allowed them to be used in diverse ways to support reading and writing (117).

**Blogging Encourages Reading**

Blogs motivate reading by requiring students to read about topics of interest in order to make meaningful comments on posts (Crane 6). Students’ reading activities also increase by reading feedback from other students. In the process, students are learning from each other as well as the blogger (Blogging in the Classroom DVD). By reading blogs and the blog comments, readers participate in lively dialogue and become part of the blogosphere (Aharony 66).

A school library blog allowed comments to stimulate and promote two-way discussion. After a fourth-grade boy asked a question about a book, the librarian’s goal of opening conversation with her elementary school community was accomplished with the implementation of a blog on the school’s web page (Cowan 6). The purpose of the blog was to get students talking about reading. So the librarian directed blog questions on books and book characters. The first question was “what is the best book you ever read?” (Cowan 21). Students quickly began to respond. As a result of the school library’s blog, students read more. Trends blossomed around the use of the blog. Approximately two weeks into the blog, the librarian observed several phenomena: circulation increased in the chapter book fiction section. Students often requested books that were highlighted on the blog. Group activity around books increased as students gathered around a computer to search the catalog for books mentioned on the blog. More students reported to the librarian their favorite personal reading preferences. Students visited the library in person to talk with the librarian about good books.
After school, students requested to log-on and post to the blog. Also a language alteration took place in the library; students frequently used the term “blogging” in relation to the library. A student also used the term “blog” to describe the summary on the back cover of a book (Cowan 24-25).

**Blogging Encourages Writing**

The College Board established the National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges to investigate the poor writing performance of students. The National Commission reported that students possess a bit of basic skill, but do not write well enough to satisfy the demands of higher learning and the work environment. The Commission called for writing reform in America’s schools. The Commission recommended making writing a focus of the curriculum; increasing the time and monetary resources earmarked to student writing (McLeod, Brown, McDaniels, and Sledge 489).

Providing students with more writing opportunities will improve students’ writing skills. Additionally providing students with more meaningful reasons to write propels them on a path to writing better. Students write more often when writing to classmates and peers on the Internet. They also write more about topics they find interesting (Ormrod 248). Utilizing blogs offers writers an authentic audience and authentic motivation for writing (Miller 14). The real world topics motivate students to reply. Authentic audiences and reasons for writing stimulate the writing process. In other words, writing for a real audience with a reason in mind, helps create authentic writing experiences (Miller 14-15).

Teacher Brian McLaughlin’s students received a surprise when a person from Texas commented on the class blog. This is an example of students receiving a real world experience
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with writing. Teacher Kathy Cassidy states, “Why would my students want to write on paper for their teacher to see, when they could write on their blog for the whole world to see?” (Crane 11). Mark Ahlness feels in fifteen years of teaching he has never witnessed anything come even close to motivating students to write the way blogging does (Crane 11). Blogging invigorates reading and writing for students.

The versatility of blogging makes it ideal for the classroom, whether writing for real world experiences or grammatical improvement. For example, English learners can hone writing skills by posting writing on the ainee82 writing blog. Bloggers are encouraged to feel at ease on this site since everyone is learning better writing skills. Through the comments space, the blog owner, ainee82 corrects the participants’ writings. Ainee82 also offers online tutoring on the blog, to people around the world, from China to Taiwan. The instant publishing feature allows immediate feedback (ainee82 1).

Cowan’s elementary school library blog encouraged students to write thoughtfully about topics. Students’ responses to questions validated the librarian’s feeling that students have a lot to say and will say it if given the opportunity. The Book Character blog is an example of how a blog engages writers (Cowan 26). Responses involving book characters were diverse. Favorite traits for book characters comprised, “bravery, humor, silliness, intelligence, leadership, assertiveness, and popularity” (Cowan 23). Student comments about the physical descriptions of book characters included, “we kind of look alike,” or “I am fairly small as well” (Cowan 23). Some students desired the lifestyle of the characters: “I would love to have all those fun and cool gadgets...” (Cowan 23). A student posted about a longing to be Junie B. Jones (Park, 2007) because her life seemed “fascinating.” Another student desired to be brave
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like Harry Potter (Rowling, 2007). One girl blogger wanted to be Judy Moody (Macdonald, 2000), since she and the character are tomboys. These responses demonstrate that student blog posts were far from being superficial and simple; they were thorough and perceptive.

**Examples of Blogs that Engage Readers and Writers**

This section presents blogs that engage participants as readers and writers. In a blog reading and writing are treated as synonymous. Both reading and writing have to be done for blogging to be successful. Some blogs place more emphasis on reading than writing and vice versa. Some of the blogs presented here—the Southern Reading Challenge, Author, and Biddle law library blogs—are geared to employ more reading. For the Author blog the librarian created a program that combined Web skills and patrons’ joy of reading books (Moran 7). “Reading” blogs attracts reading enthusiasts. The Authors in Autumn Interactive Story (AAIS) blog and the anee82 blog emphasize writing more. In the final analysis reading and writing are components of all of the blogs presented; they go “hand-in-glove.”

**Blogs that Engage Readers**

The Southern Reading Challenge program (Moran 7) focused on Southern writers. As the librarian created the original blog for the program, participants read books by Southern writers. The first blog post announced the challenge, scheduled to last for approximately three months. After a Mr. Linky widget (allowing set-up and management of lists of participants) connection to the blog was created, more than fifty bloggers confirmed interest in the challenge. Twenty-seven bloggers finished the challenge by the deadline. For three months participants read three books by three different southern authors. During the three month period, readers were to write blog posts on the readings. Posts contained quotes from the
books, reviews of the books, Web sites for more reading, and a link to the *Maggie Reads* blog. Each Friday a drawing took place announcing a winner. The winner of the challenge received pecans from a company in Mississippi. Other prizes included signed copies of relevant books (Moran 7).

The *Southern Reading Challenge* is one example of how a reading challenge blog is used to promote reading. A similar blogging challenge can be conducted with any theme and any amount of books read within a given time frame. The librarian selects the theme, how long the program will last, the amount of books to be read, and the type of challenge and reward. For example, challenges such as “Book to Movie,” “Seafaring,” “Printz Winners,” “Cozy Mystery,” and more can be planned (Moran 8). A reading challenge blog sponsored by a library gives students opportunity to read, learn to blog, and put new skills to work (Moran 8).

**More Blogs that Engage Readers**

The *Author* and the *Biddle* law library blogs engage readers in various ways too. The *Author* blog offers readers a new angle on reading. Many authors like to communicate with readers by blogging (Beaman 31-32). Young adult author and regular blogger Sarah Dessen posts to her ‘livejournal’ blog almost daily. This is how Dessen interacts with readers. Based on responses Dessen received during a book tour, the blog proved successful. Not only did readers pose questions and answers about the book, readers posed questions about what Dessen had written about in the blog. Dessen met readers who had read her blog and then decided to read her books (Beaman 31-32). Blogs permit the readers and authors to have a closer relationship. Dessen also used the blog as a platform to spread the word about her new novel, *Just Listen*. Since the novel is a story about a boy and a girl connecting over music, Dessen used the blog to
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heighten the reading experience. Dessen developed a playlist on iTunes to go along with the novel, and posted the list on the blog. The playlist acted as a bonus for readers. Dessen’s desire was to include the playlist as an addition to reading the book. Several authors have created playlists on blogs to go along with the novels. Including a playlist, “gets teens excited about reading a book and provides insight into the characters, story, and inspiration behind the book” (Beaman 32). Engaging students through novel Author blogs stimulates reading enthusiasm (Beaman 32).

Getting students blogging about reading preferences heightens their thinking about their reading. Blogs promote reading at all school levels. The Biddle law library blog exemplifies a reading blog at the university level. In 2007, the University of Pennsylvania Biddle Law Library’s Biddle blog explored different ways of communicating with its patrons. Amongst the motives for this endeavor were the results collected from a survey that the librarian conducted of law students to measure their use of blogs, wikis, and social networking sites. Results indicated that students did not use these technologies much; however, many students reported regularly reading blogs for professional and personal purposes. Additionally some of Biddle’s professional staff used blogs to stay abreast of new developments in the disciplines of law and librarianship. A library blog seemed a good way to connect both of these tendencies (Steele and Greenlee 116). The posts on the Biddle blog offered practical and meaningful commentary and often contained links to outside information sources. The Biddle blog attached worth to the resources and information because of the annotations provided. This method also promoted institutional buy-in to the success of the library’s programs. The blog motivated students’
interest in reading the posted information. Steele and Greenlee wrote about the University of Pennsylvania Law Library *Biddle* blog’s impact on readers:

> The very fact that the library has succeeded in maintaining a frequently updated blog for more than three years is our major success....We were also pleased with the traffic that the blog attracted....Visitation statistics suggest that the Biddle blog has a solid following. (118)

The success of the *Biddle* blog spreads the message that the staff at the Biddle Law Library considers methods to use 21st century technology in its operations. The blog offers evidence that Biddle librarians are involved in amassing and integrating resources for the patrons, and utilizing Web 2.0 as a sharing tool. Finally it demonstrates that blogs promote reading at all levels of the educational spectrum (Steele and Greenlee 118).

**Blogs that Engage Writers**

In this section two blogs that engage writers are presented: The *Authors in Autumn Interactive Story (AAIS)* and the *anee82* blogs. Both encourage writing but in different ways. The AAIS method focuses on collaboration and creativity. Students work together to write a story where everyone contributes with his or her own style. The *anee82* blog is used mostly by English language learners supporting each other as they learn the English language.

Blogging an interactive story to sharpen students’ writing skills and motivate students to write proved successful with the AAIS blog (Crane 5). The AAIS blog allowed numerous students to collaborate on writing a story. It is similar to having a teacher pass around a paper in class and each student adding a written paragraph to the story. Each student contributes a different viewpoint, writing flair, character, and plot to enrich the story. The library media specialist
invited other elementary and middle schools in the area to join this blog. The library media specialists worked with students and teachers to clarify how a story is developed and how to prepare students to add to the story online (Youse, Kennibuerg, and McCormack 21-21). With knowledge on how a story is created and the knowledge of how an AAIS story works, students’ anticipation for the writing activity grew.

There are two parts to the AAIS, the actual story and the online writing instrument. Anyone can view the story page. Access to the writing instrument requires a user name and password to access the blog. Upon visiting the story’s Web page, the beginning of the story is prepared for the students. This helps with setting the opening plot and characters. Student writing is located below the opening of the story. Students’ additions to the story are time stamped and include the name of the school. The schools participating in the AAIS story collaborated to write using audio and visual distance learning equipment so teachers could work with students to write the ending. At the completion of the story, all student entries were collected and placed in book form, downloaded from the Web site and printed (Youse, Kennibuerg and McCormack 22). Blogging makes interactive storytelling possible among students collaborating from different locations.

The ainee82 blog mentioned earlier is designed for writers; especially those who are writing and learning English as a second language. Bloggers receive support, guidance, and pointers on their writings from the owner of the blog. They receive feedback on the technical aspects of their writings. Bloggers do not feel any stigma because everyone is trying to learn (ainee82 1). Both blogs; the AAIS and the ainee82 blogs make writing exciting and less fearful for student writers.
Conclusion

In conclusion, blogging stimulates students of various ages to read and write creatively, insightfully, and consistently. The Web 2.0 tool’s multifaceted advantages allow readers and writers to interrelate without barriers regardless of where they are located. Blogs’ simple operation instructions allow librarians and other educators to incorporate them into the classroom, bringing life and energy to assignments. Bloggers do not have to be technologically savvy to operate them. Regardless of the type of blog, students’ ability to post comments and receive instant feedback works wonders on their enthusiasm and eagerness to contribute to the dialogue. The adaptability of blogs motivates educators to seek out new ways to use blogging in the classroom, school wide, and across schools. Based on its use, the blog is one Web 2.0 tool that will be used by educators for a long time to come.
CHAPTER 3
CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The research questions presented in chapter one will be addressed in this chapter. The questions will be answered using the information reviewed in chapter two. The questions below guided the study:

1. How do blogs impact students’ interest in reading and writing?
2. How can educators use blogs to increase students’ interest in reading and writing?
3. How does using blogs promote collaboration in the classroom and beyond?

The questions will be addressed separately below.

The Impact of Blogs on Students’ Reading and Writing Interests

Blogs positively impact students’ reading and writing habits for several reasons. The blogs embedded features allow for the easy and spontaneous flow of information between or among participants. The comment box on blogs allows readers and writers to respond immediately to comments or posts. The aggregator that can be added to blogs allows bloggers to only read and respond to selected blogs and comments. The ability to incorporate graphics, colors, fonts, styles, backgrounds etc., also piques the interest of participants. Participants become instant creators and publishers of information.

Due to blogs interactive features, participants spend more time thinking about reading and writing. Students correct grammar and spelling errors before publishing information because students want to impress friends and others when conversing. The ability to collaborate with people who share common interests makes for authentic communication.
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where dialog is meaningful, engaging, relevant and fun. Collaboration is a prime reason blogs improve reading and writing.

Educators use Blogs to Increase Students’ Interest in Reading and Writing

Teacher librarians and teachers as facilitators of technology craftily place Web 2.0 tools, namely blogs, in the hands of students and staff in school settings. Teacher librarians stand at the center of this revolution due to their role as supporters and connectors to all the educators and students in the building. Teacher librarians have the responsibility of providing learners with the opportunities to blog. Teacher librarians accomplish this task in different ways.

Initiating reading or book blogs attracts participants due to the posting and sharing of favorite books, authors, characters, plots, themes and more. Book blogs are proven successful in motivating participants to read more and share what they read with others. Classroom blogs used to stimulate writing are successful because students enjoy writing to authentic audiences, people who look forward to reading each other’s posts or writings. Because of the use of blogs, students are actively engaged in reading and writing, unlike the traditional paper-based method which basically is one-way participation between the reader/writer and whoever has access to the page.

Blogs in the Classroom and Beyond

Blogs have no boundaries. Students no longer are bound to paper and pencil; students can reach as far across the ocean as possible, and around the world with messages, commentary, thoughts, and feelings, and reach people who in turn will respond, making comments, reading and writing in return. In this highly global platform, blogs connect friends,
families, loved ones for no charge, only the cost of Internet service. However public libraries, schools and other institutions provide free Internet services to users. In other words, there really is nothing standing in the way of communicating with anyone, anywhere, anytime, or day.

Where this revolution goes is yet to be seen. In the meantime it is exciting, and refreshing to be participants in blogging. Evidence is seen in participants’ (of all ages), interest, enthusiasm, and activity in blogging. Blogs are increasing at a fast pace; many are created every day, all over the world. This testifies to the way that students and people in general are reading and writing more for a variety of reasons; to people they know and sometimes do not know but will get to know through this innovative connection. Classroom assignments are becoming more relevant as they incorporate blogging in order to capture and maintain the interest of students in reading and writing.
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