



## BLOGS, RSS AND WIKIS: A PERSONALIZED AND COLLABORATIVE INTERNET.

More and more people are making use of the Internet as a two-way communication medium. It is not just about finding content but also helping to create it. This is one of our goals in education as well, to help our students to write as well as read, to analyze, synthesize and communicate rather than just memorize or copy.

Although the Web has been around for more than 10 years, only recently have tools for non-techies become available for anyone to quickly add their own ideas to what is becoming a much more collaborative web.

### **B L O G S**

Blogs, short for WebLogs (or web logs) have become a simple means of making your daily thoughts available for others to read. If you choose, you can also allow others to comment on what you have written. Content is usually displayed with the most recent at the top. Weblogs tend to be more personal

than a typical webpage. Sebastian Fiedler, a doctoral candidate at the University of Augsburg, Germany, writes in his weblog: ([seblogging.cognitivearchitects.com](http://seblogging.cognitivearchitects.com))

“Weblogs are not special because of their technology but because of the practice and authorship they shape. And it is a practice that will require a weblog author to be »connected« to processes, discourses and communities.”

You can use a weblog professionally to collaborate with colleagues around the world. Start by reading others' blogs and contributing comments on what they have to say.

### **F I N D I N G B L O G S**

One of the reasons Google has become the most used search engine is because it makes use of the collective wisdom of everyone that recommends a website by linking to it. The sites at the top (besides the sponsored sites) have

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

### **WEBSITES OF INTEREST**

- [www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com)  
Create your own blog and a personal page with headlines from other sites of interest to you.
- <http://www.chtu.org/rss.xml>  
Cleveland Heights Teachers Union's RSS feed. Type into your bloglines page.
- [classblogmeister.com](http://classblogmeister.com)  
Easily manage a classroom blog.

## **WIKIPEDIA [HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/](http://en.wikipedia.org/)**

Websites that allow collaborative editing of the content of the webpage can be called Wikis.

One of the most used Wikis is the Wikipedia. Anyone, including your class, can add or edit the content of a entry. You might think that a site that anyone can add to would be a total mess, but you may be surprised by how well collaborative

editing can work. Poor content soon gets removed by others. You can view the edit history of each entry in the encyclopedia, to see who made changes and why.

The Wikipedia explains that it “is both a product and a process. Even if the product is not yet perfect, the process ensures that at the end of every day, the

encyclopedia is higher quality than it was at the beginning of the day. “

According to the Wikipedia, the creator of this collaborative web concept, Ward Cunningham, named it for the “wiki wiki” or “quick” shuttle buses at Honolulu Airport. It was a more colorful name than “quick web”.

## BLOGS, RSS AND WIKIS: (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the most links from other sites. You can use this list of “recommended sites” to find a site by a person or organization that you feel has done a good job of researching, analyzing and presenting the topic. Take advantage of the expertise already out there. Within the Blog community, you can do the same thing.

A Google search of “weblog education” will bring up a number of sites/weblogs related to education. Note that changing the order of the search words, or adding words will bring up a different set of sites. Sometimes the best sites are not on the first Google page. One site I would recommend is Will Richardson’s [www.weblogg-ed.com/](http://www.weblogg-ed.com/) He is a blogvangelist and Supervisor of Instructional Technology and Communications at Hunterdon Central Regional High School in Flemington, NJ.

## Bloglines

In addition to his own blog site, Will uses another site,

[bloglines.com](http://bloglines.com), to share a list of his favorite educational blogs. You can create your own blogs for free on this site. By using his list of blogs, you can take advantage of his time and experience to sort out the best from the ordinary. As everyone has slightly different interests and opinions, you will soon create your own personalized list, which is easy to do with a Bloglines account.

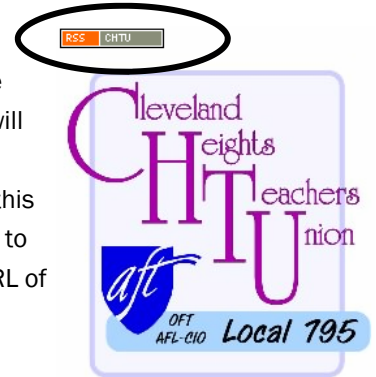
### R S S / X M L

If you have to visit each person or organization’s website/blog to see what is new, you probably won’t do it very often. Many websites and blogs provide a concise list of new content to which you can subscribe. Instead of receiving the list as an e-mail, you can add it to your personal webpage at [bloglines.com](http://bloglines.com), [my.yahoo.com](http://my.yahoo.com) or other aggregators. The power of this concept is that you can see at a glance what is new on many websites/blogs all at once, and then visit only those with current content you are interested in.

This concise list of new content or headlines is called an RSS or XML feed. Look for an XML or RSS link on a blog or website. **Don’t click on it as you would an ordinary link.**

Instead, right click on it and choose “copy shortcut”. You can then paste the shortcut (URL) into you’re my.yahoo, bloglines or other personalized webpage.

The Cleveland Heights Teachers Union website has an RSS feed. This will allow you to check out what’s new on the site this summer without having to actually go to it. The URL of the feed is <http://www.chtu.org/rss.xml>



You can also use blogs with your students. Class discussions and assignments can be augmented by out of class discussions and comments from the web community.

## BLOGMEISTER

Blogmeister ([classblogmeister.com/](http://classblogmeister.com/)) is free blog site designed for the needs of educators. You can more easily manage class accounts with it.

This summer take some time to try some of these easy to use tools in an area of interest to you. You may be surprised to find out how easy it is to use the Internet both personally and professionally. Feel free to e-mail me with your experiences and/or questions.

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