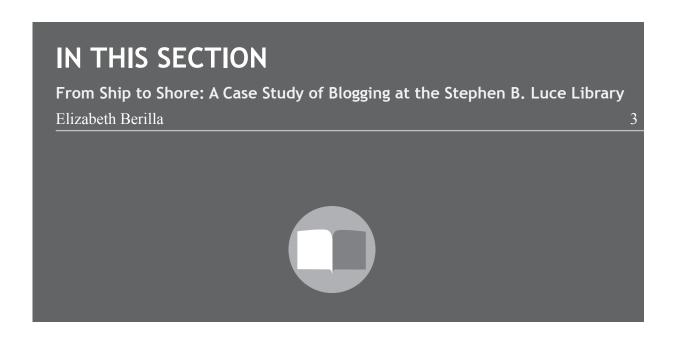# The Library Publishing Toolkit: Supplementary Material

From Ship to Shore: A Case Study of Blogging at the Stephen B. Luce Library

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L ike the evolution of sailors' experiences with ships from sail to steam, information professionals are currently exploring educational technologies which address the needs of their unique communities. As we transition into a Web 2.0 world, locating, learning, and implementing social media in an educational setting have forced librarians and educators to expand their traditional approaches to publishing in an academic setting, especially keeping the preferences of their respective audiences in mind. A collaborative effort between the Stephen B. Luce Library and the Training Ship EMPIRE STATE VI of the State University of New York (SUNY) Maritime College, the Library Blog provides advanced opportunity for demonstrating growth, cooperative workflows, and encouraging future outreach endeavors

by the library across campus and around the world.

Background and History

SUNY Maritime College educates a full-time equivalent of nearly 1,900 undergraduate and graduate students. Focused coursework predominantly prepares them to earn degrees and licenses in marine transportation or engineering; students who do not pursue the license program follow courses of study in international trade and transportation. The Global Business and Transportation Department likewise awards Master of Science degrees to its graduates. With a specialized collection of approximately 92,000 print volumes and 24,000 electronic collections, the Stephen B. Luce Library also hosts the institutional archives, which measures over 900 linear feet, to promote the academic mission of SUNY Maritime College.

Students in the graduate and undergraduate programs who pursue the license option to become mates or engineers in the American Merchant Marine must complete a required component of their education at sea, mostly serving aboard SUNY Maritime College's Training Ship EMPIRE STATE VI. During the 90-day Summer Sea Term (broken into two 45-day sessions, including various ports of call), students operate, maintain, and learn about vessel facilities under the tutelage of experienced ship's crew, watch officers, instructors—and *one librarian*.

Mirroring the services of shoreside reference librarianship yet faced with unprecedented challenges, the ship's librarian holds an honorary officer position aboard the EMPIRE STATE VI and provides 60–70 hours of library service per week with a collection of nearly 6,000 items. One of the only means of communication to shore is via e-mail sent twice daily in batches from the ship, and there is no full Internet service while at sea. The ship's librarian is charged with the responsibility of e-mailing descriptive anecdotes about the activities of students aboard the ship back to the Stephen B. Luce Library (with a full-time staff of five librarians and two paraprofessional staff), which are then posted to the Library Blog (http://lucelibrary.blogspot. com/) for readers dedicated to following the progress of their sons, daughters, and loved ones at sea through this singular, daily lifeline.

The Library Blog, which has been published since June 1, 2009, with some of the first posts coming from the ship's librarian, has evolved since its initiation to capture detailed descriptions of life at sea to newsfeeds about exhibits, presentations, and library updates.

Literature Review

Following the experiences of other academic institutions and their audiences of faculty, staff, students, and researchers, the Library Blog mirrors the best practices and learned outcomes shared in their literature. Gordon-Murnane (2008) argues that blogs have become a tool for users to share sources with the blog's creator, and amongst other readers (p. 28); blogs themselves harness "collective intelligence" of readers within an academic or social setting, encouraging others to contribute and enhance this valuable collaborative service as "co-creators" of resources. Curran, Murray, and Christian (2007) share that, besides the ability

to communicate more broadly through various Web 2.0 platforms, users are *expecting* the ability to contribute content for the creation of new knowledge (p. 290), moving from passive readers to active participants.

Information professionals have tirelessly acted throughout their careers, Stam (2006) demonstrates, as "bridge builders" between education and special collections (p. 17). Taking into consideration not only the educational components of academia, but the overall social and historical context of experience, publishing through a medium such as a blog would be considered an organic, holistic progression to personalizing the reading experience, and encouraging the reader to help build the "bridge."

Alternatively, individuals who shy away from Web 2.0 participation cite a lack of "personal" experience using a third-party technology to communicate ideas versus an actual person-to-person setting (Naylor, Stoffel, & Van Der Laan, 2008, p. 352). Mi and Nesta (2006) also found that though Web 2.0 may impact the social behaviors of their users, technologies can form an undesirable connection between traditional library services and their users—just because libraries *can* make a blog or use social media does not mean they *should*, argue Mi and Nesta. Instead, these services must demonstrate a beneficial service and add value to the academic experience without undue duplication (p. 419). This premise is one which information professionals strive to overcome on a daily basis.

Ongoing metrics on Web 2.0 and blog usage have been disparate, given the "intangible" nature of their application (Fichter & Wisniewski, 2008, p. 55). However, some possible areas of measurement are behavioral data, outcomes, experiences, and performance indicators (p. 56). As relatively little effort is needed to collect the statistics, Fichter and Wisniewski argue that the consideration of Web 2.0 use is significant to promoting further metrics and outreach efforts.

Evolution of Services

Historically, the Stephen B. Luce Library has sought to bridge the divide of information from shore and ship to fully encompass the academic year with students in the classroom and aboard the EMPIRE STATE VI. Starting in 1946, the first collection of books was borrowed from the Traveling Libraries section of the New York State Library. During the cruise of 1958, it was noted by senior crew of the ship that, "These boys all have more of them books sticking out of their pockets than grease rags and wrenches" (Institutional Archives, 1959, Box E101). To the librarians ashore, this was an affirmation that additional resources should be sent with the ship. By 1963, the Stephen B. Luce Library started sending librarians along with their books to sea.

Early correspondences between ship and shore were, by nature of their provenance, via airmail whenever the librarian made port. In an early letter from Ship's Librarian Ron Bowman to Library Director Richard Corson, common information shared today via e-mailed blog posting is expressed: "Dear Mr. Corson: At this point of the cruise it's safe to say that there have been better crossings. We have had only one really sunny day and none without rather strong winds… I understand they are having real difficulty in getting the Third Classmen oriented

since all instruction down there is by word-of-mouth. A lot of seasickness the first three days made it worse" (1972, Box E102). The ship's librarians often took the opportunity while in port to mail back rolls of film with images taken from cruises of students, activities, events, and destinations to be developed by the librarians back at SUNY Maritime College.

Correspondence became more frequent into the 1980s and 1990s, with the librarian sharing postcards and evidence that the ship's librarians' letters were circulated throughout the staff and encouraging "round robin" style letters back to the ship in return (1991, E186). These were indeed humble origins of ship-to-shore exchanges before the advent of collaborative technologies.

Workflow

With the precedent set by ship's librarians' correspondence from sea, a foundation was in place to begin a larger bridge across interested constituents outside of the Stephen B. Luce Library. The decision to publicly share information from the ship with the larger community merely expanded on the traditional, information-sharing practices of the shore librarians and encouraged additional collaborative behaviors. The connections built between ship and shore over half a century expanded the library's mission to share the seagoing experience, collections, services, and librarians with a larger audience of interested parties (Stam, 2006, p. 17).

Seizing the opportunity in 2009 to begin recording the events and activities on ship and shore, the very first post encourages the interactive nature of blogging:

> Welcome to the Stephen B. Luce Library Blog. Read news, announcements, research tips, commentaries, and lots more about Luce Library at Fort Schuyler and Ship's Library onboard TS EMPIRE STATE. Many interactive features are available, including ability to leave comments (all comments are reviewed prior to posting), email blog posts to anyone, and subscribe to blog feed to stay alerted on any new blog posts (Stephen B. Luce Library, 2009).

Immediately, the Stephen B. Luce Library encouraged readers to contribute their own content and be actively engaged with the blog posts, similar to the experiences of Gordon-Murnane and Curran, Murray, and Christian (2006; 2007). Parents and family of students aboard the 2009 Summer Sea Term cruise began commenting, thanking the librarian for their descriptions of life at sea and student activities, and sending words of encouragement or special requests to their loved ones aboard.

Figure 1: The Information Cycle for Library Blog

Given the predominantly offline nature of the ship's library, the librarians ashore sought to rectify some confusion: although the blog posts from the ship's librarian appeared to be "live," there was actually a "middle man" (outreach specialist) ashore (see Figure 1). Despite the ability to e-mail home (sans attachments), very few students made that outreach effort due to complicated watch schedules during cruise. The responsibility, therefore, fell to the ship's librarian, who would send daily updates to the librarians on shore. From shore, the librarians edit, format, and repost the ship's librarian's e-mails to the Library Blog for readers. Readers would in turn post comments to the blog, which would be e-mailed from shore librarians to the ship's librarian and often would inspire the next topic of e-mail back to shore, ad infinitum. On the occasion of reaching port, the ship's librarian would have the unique opportunity to e-mail digital photographs taken aboard ship back to shore via Internet cafes; these photographs could be added to the Library Blog through the same posting system as the daily updates.

> ## Despite the ability to e-mail home, very few students made that outreach effort due to complicated watch schedules during cruise. The responsibility, therefore, fell to the ship's librarian, who would send daily updates to the librarians on shore.

This goodwill effort of librarians to the shoreside community has blossomed, both during Summer Sea Term and the academic year. The academic department charged with preparing for Summer Sea Term now includes a link to the Library Blog along with their information page for cruise, increasing the followers of the Library Blog exponentially each year. The target audience of students, staff, faculty, and researchers now includes family and friends of SUNY Maritime College, and our constituencies have become one in the same group (Stam, 2006, p.

23). During the academic year's events, the workflow obviously excludes the ship component, but highlights the experience of readers' engagement, commenting, special event invitations, and resource sharing. Updating the Library Blog has been relegated primarily to one outreach librarian, with edits contributed by librarian colleagues.

Future Plans, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The flow of correspondence has increased dramatically with the improvement of communication technologies in the nearly 70 years of the Stephen B. Luce Library's involvement with Summer Sea Term. Although the evolution maintains the original, asynchronous behavior of information sharing from ship to shore, or shore to Library Blog, the level of collaboration has improved significantly and continues to expand due to user-generated cooperation. Future endeavors will be focused on building a more synchronous exchange of communication, despite the obvious difficulties of not currently having an online ship's library. Future efforts could explore synchronous chat or Skype options if current restrictions to ship technologies are lifted.

Secondly, the current use of the blog-hosting site, Blogger, automatically indexes all photographs uploaded within the Library's Blog through Picasa. Efforts have started in using the Picasa database to further act as a digital repository for electronic images collected at sea and shore, as well as a host for sharing digitized photographs from the institutional archives collection. Through Picasa, the Stephen B. Luce Library aims to crowdsource information from alumni, family, friends, and researchers on specific photo albums for any identifying metadata; i.e., cadet names, locations, and dates. As this digital repository grows with the assistance of images brought in from the Library Blog and institutional archives, the Stephen B. Luce Library looks forward to collaborating with readers even further.

The Library Blog, which requires zero cost and little time to moderate, has been an ideal forum for outreach, announcements, and publishing the experiences of the SUNY Maritime College community. Adding on to the experiences of the librarians' predecessors, particularly with correspondence from Summer Sea Term, Blogger and Picasa have allowed further growth through naturally occurring information-sharing processes. With their proven history, evolution, and current workflow for the Library Blog, the librarians of the Stephen B. Luce Library look forward to smooth sailing ahead for new publishing opportunities.

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