

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

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The aim of the present study was to analyze the blog content present on the LIS blogosphere. The statistical and descriptive blog content data collected formed the basis for understanding the subjects represented along with the wide range of blog content existing on the LIS blogosphere. The conclusions and suggestions that emerge from the discussions of the findings and interpretations reported in the preceding Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are being presented in this last concluding chapter.

The present study, as mentioned earlier, studied 343 LIS blogs. LIS Blog content comprised of 2593 entries (out of which 30.19% were blog posts, 24.48% were responses & comments, and 45.31 % were links). This data was further used in investigating the various research questions which the researcher has tried to answer. The conclusions emerging from the analysis and findings of the study related to the five objectives of the study have been addressed in the following sections, along with suggestions, areas identified for further research and a summation of the study.

8.1 Conclusions

8.1.1 Objective 1

To categorize LIS blogs into broad subject categories:

The study concludes that the LIS blogosphere has blogs discussing very specific subjects as well as very broad subjects. By delving deeper into the LIS blogosphere compared to earlier studies attempting LIS blog categorization, the blogger comprehensively categorized 343 LIS blogs into 54 specific subject categories. Every single blog which showed a focus in a

specific subject had an individual place in the LIS blogosphere category listing. The researcher further consolidated the 54 specific subject categories into clusters of 11 broad subject categories. The specific subject terms taken were natural language key terms existing on the blog.

It can be concluded that over 30% of the blogs fall into two subject categories namely, Emerging Technologies and Collection Development. The remaining 70% of the blogs fall into the rest of the nine subject categories.

A small percentage (5.83%) of blogs survives for a decade or more on the LIS blogosphere. Some blogs have even survived for more than a decade and a half. Although a small percentage this group is a record of the growth of the subject as evidenced by the bloggers sustained interest in the subject.

Women bloggers emerge as the oldest bloggers in the LIS blogosphere. The two oldest blogs as of May 2013, *Research Buzz* and *The Shifted Librarian*, are 17 and 16 years old respectively and are authored by women bloggers. Ninety percent (90%) of the oldest blogs have been sustained by solo bloggers which is an achievement in itself.

Women are blogging more than men if one goes by the statistics of oldest blogs in LIS blogosphere. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the oldest blogs are being written by women and 44% are written by men.

It is important for bloggers to encourage users to stay connected and share their blog content. Therefore, bloggers are using and encouraging the use of various Web 2.0 tools like RSS Feeds, E-mails and Twitter. Vast majorities of the blogs are facilitating subscription to their content through RSS feeds followed by Email and the micro blogging site Twitter.

8.1.2 Objective 2

To rank LIS Blogs on the basis of the number of links found in each broad subject category.

Links form an integral part of blog content. Of the 2593 entries analyzed (entries comprise of a total of blog posts, comments & responses and Links), on an average the blog content comprised of 45 % links. Thus, links form a vast majority of the content indicating the subject focus and popularity of the blog. Bloggers use links to bring the reader's attention to related content. It is concluded that bloggers are very selective about the links they select and display on their blogs. The blog *Walt at Random*, a blog from the subject category Multi-topical ranked highest with 1902 links. In the top ten blogs, four blogs were from the broad subject category Collection Development, three blogs from the broad subject category of Multi-topical, two from Libraries and one blog from the broad subject category Emerging Technologies.

Out of the eleven broad subject categories, it can be concluded that the top ranking blogs of the six broad subject categories, viz., Ethics, LIS Study & Research, Information Science, Library Management, Emerging Technologies, and Services with the highest number of internal links also had the highest number of external links within that broad subject category.

The oldest blogs do not necessarily have more number of links indicating that the bloggers in the current decade are using more links than the bloggers from the first decade of blogging. Out of the 20 oldest blogs, only two blogs emerged with highest number of links in their subject categories.

8.1.3 Objective 3 & 4

To identify the subject trends in selected blogs in each broad subject category & to analyze the comments within these selected blogs to identify their contribution in the development of subject trends:

Blogs on specific topics provide a platform for instant access to current and relevant information, thereby making it possible to detect current trends in the broad subject categories. On an average the blog content comprised of 30 % blog posts and 25 % responses & comments. The archived blog posts and comments made it possible to trace the documented growth of a trend or a discussion thread.

The qualitative content analysis of the blog content revealed that the major subject trends across the broad subject categories for the period October 2012 to March 2013 are creative commons, open access, information ethics, institutional repositories, entrepreneurship in library services, marketing, MARC, metadata & RDA, public libraries, library promotion, library advocacy altmetrics, public library funding, and information literacy. The comments analysis showed minor variations in the trend terms derived in few subject categories. The additional trend terms derived from comment analysis were library supplies, outreach services, social web, and Internet research.

Certain trend terms have also been observed with high number of comments received which validated the contribution of the term in the development of the trend. The trend terms altmetrics, public libraries and marketing are being discussed across multiple broad subject categories.

It is also observed that discussions on these trend terms which begin on the blogosphere are carried forward on other forms of Web 2.0 communication medium such as Google+, Twitter, etc. or vice versa with discussion threads beginning on these mediums and

being carried forward on the blogosphere. Bloggers are also attempting to summarize and preserve these discussions comprising of comments and responses through different methods.

8.1.4 Objective 5

To identify the percentage of bloggers who publish in formal channels of communication.

Research conducted has demonstrated that blogging about their publications and/or research increases the visibility of the authors and their respective work. Blog content analysis revealed that bloggers were discussing, promoting and making available their publications on their blogs. These publications were categorized into seven groups, viz., articles, papers published in conference proceedings, books, book chapters, reviews & columns, editorial publications and miscellaneous publications.

It can be concluded that bloggers are publishing articles the most followed by papers published in conferences, one or more books, chapters in books and encyclopedias, reviews and columns, editorial publications and miscellaneous publications in the decreasing order.

The data regarding the number of contributing bloggers with their respective genders & designations collected generated the following results. A vast majority (84%) of blogs are authored by a solo blogger. More than fifty percent (54%) of solo bloggers are women ascertaining the fact that women bloggers are playing a leading role on the LIS Blogosphere. The remaining blogs had contributions from multiple bloggers (a blog with more than two contributing bloggers was termed as multiple) and two contributing bloggers. The broad subject category Preservation has all the eight blogs written by solo bloggers. The broad subject categories LIS Study & Research, Knowledge Organization & Processing, Preservation, Information Science and Ethics did not have blogs written by two bloggers. The

data collected and analyzed about designations of the bloggers reveals that more blogs are being written by presidents, directors, chief librarians, librarians, managers and curators.

The bloggers of the oldest blogs have published books (55%) and articles (80%) indicating that blogging as an activity also finds an extension to publications in the formal channels of communication.

8.2 Suggestions

- Although many bloggers are categorizing their content, the effective retrieval of this content by search engines needs to be addressed. A clear subject focus stated on the blog could also help in better retrievals. A comprehensive blog directory stating the subject of the blog is the need of the hour, with provision for continuous updating.
- There are blogs which have sustained themselves for a decade or more – a highly time consuming and intensive activity making it a record of the growth of the subject focus of the blog and the bloggers own sustained interest in it. The onus of archiving the blog although lies on the blogger, but in many cases where the blogger discontinues the blog, due to unplanned and unforeseen circumstances, the blog becomes defunct. Would it be the individual, institutional, departmental, national or global responsibility to address issues related to blog archiving? Bloggers in accordance with organizations or institutions ready to take on this responsibility need to address this issue. The Pandora Program of the National Library of Australia archives selected Australian library related blogs. Library of Congress' Legal Blawgs Archive is an archive of more than hundred legal blogs.

- In support of the Open Access Movement more bloggers could give access to their complete full text publications on their blog or choose to publish in open access journals.
- There were some blogs clearly stating blog policies. In this context it would be interesting to know the scope of review policies for blog content.
- Scholarly blog content is an excellent source of enriched content. It was found that blog content is also being listed in Google Scholar with number of citations mentioned for relevant posts. It would be interesting to explore the possibilities of blog content being accepted as a formal publication, earning citation points and being regarded as academic performance indicator for the bloggers and their posts by the organisations to which they are affiliated.
- Bloggers should attempt to start a blog only if they can pursue it for some time and not add to the e-littering of the blogosphere. The challenge is to create mechanisms to retrieve existing blogs and making blog content more accessible.
- The biggest and perhaps the best differentiating factor between a blog and a regular website is the provision of inviting comments to the blog content. Comments should be allowed and not moderated as noticed on some blogs.
- Blog retrieval may be aided if catalogued or indexed. A registration either through an ISSN number or being part of an international catalogue like OCLC which is already cataloguing blogs may be linked to a directory of blogs.

8.3 Further Research

This research has helped in identifying areas for further exploration and research on the LIS blogosphere.

- A blog categorization of all the operational blogs in LIS blogosphere can be undertaken. This would be very helpful in identifying all the LIS subjects represented on the LIS blogosphere.
- An in depth study on the nature of the links and the correlations of the external and internal links would help us in understanding the selection of the links as well as the subject focus of the links selected. What could be the other factors affecting the number of links present on the blog is a potential area of study?
- Trend term identification and analysis for key blogs in specific subjects or the oldest blogs could be studied to give us a chronological record of the growth of the subject over a decade or more.
- The designation of the blogger can be further linked to the publications in each broad subject category. An analysis of the publications of the blogger as per their designations would help us in identifying the scholarly contributions of various designation groups.
- What are the motivations for bloggers to allow or disallow comments? How many blogs allow moderated comments? Exploring answers to these questions could also be an interesting area of study.

- Further research can be conducted to find out the number of new blogs on the LIS blogosphere started after 2010.

8.4 Summation of the Study

This study was an examination of the LIS blogosphere on the basis of the researcher's attempt to understand the scope & coverage of library & information science subjects represented on the LIS Blogosphere. The content analysis of the LIS blogosphere involved analysing the three core components: the blog posts, the comments & responses generated for each blog and the links present on the blogs for a period of six months. Findings & analysis revealed that bloggers are blogging on very specific subjects which are a source of focussed and current information. It was found that a blog with its chronologically arranged content becomes a record of the growth of the subject trends over the period of the blogs life span. Blogs discussing emerging technologies and multiple subject areas exist in a high number on the LIS blogosphere. Bloggers are giving access to their formally published publications there by promoting open access to their content. Bloggers have been actively blogging for more than a decade in their subject areas. Women are blogging more on the LIS blogosphere compared to men. Of the three main components of the blog content analysed links formed the vast majority of the blog entries found on the blogs. Bloggers are using links extensively to communicate recent updates on the blog subject focus.

The LIS blogosphere has been expanding gradually with new blogs entering into the foray of LIS blogging. As the investigation has revealed that blogging is mostly a solitary activity, the closure of blogs is also a prevailing problem. On an average 72% blogs survive for more than or equal to five years.

Bloggers are at the forefront of exploring the newly emerging technologies to sustain the readership of their blogs. Blogs are being used by bloggers to promote their achievements and their publications. Blogs are being used as laboratories for testing new ideas, collecting opinions & feedbacks, requesting for solutions to real time problems encountered. Although blogs are fast being replaced by newer forms or entrants, select blogs have made a place for themselves. The researcher is of the opinion that subject focussed blogs written by experts in their own areas, with their timely updates; eliminate the need for the long wait for peer reviewed articles. In countries where access to subscription based journals is limited due to various factors, subject specific blogs with their open access format and proven ability for sustaining themselves provide a promising platform for procuring current information.