

10-1-2010

# Weblogs and the Beatles

Paul DeVries

*Johnson & Wales University - Charlotte*, [pdevries@jwu.edu](mailto:pdevries@jwu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scholarsarchive.jwu.edu/culinary\\_fac](http://scholarsarchive.jwu.edu/culinary_fac)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## Repository Citation

DeVries, Paul, "Weblogs and the Beatles" (2010). *Faculty Publications and Research*. Paper 1.  
[http://scholarsarchive.jwu.edu/culinary\\_fac/1](http://scholarsarchive.jwu.edu/culinary_fac/1)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Culinary Arts at ScholarsArchive@JWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications and Research by an authorized administrator of ScholarsArchive@JWU. For more information, please contact [egearing@jwu.edu](mailto:egearing@jwu.edu).

## Weblogs and the Beatles

Paul DeVries

The importance of informational technology truly hit home about three weeks ago when one of my freshman students exclaimed “so exactly, who are the Beatles anyway?” It had never really occurred to me that as I have been getting older, my students have been getting younger, a lot younger! The average age of my student freshman class is around 17-18 years old, students who have been fostered in a society dominated by the internet, computers, I-Pods and Microsoft. Most cannot remember a world without My-Space and Facebook, and none can remember a time without PowerPoint or Excel.

Students today are spending inordinate amounts of time plugged into a surreal world, one that to some degree is akin to a surrogate parent. They are anything but conventional, learning in a non-linear fashion, developing comprehensive relationships with online communities, while fast becoming material extensions of their own online personas. Education for them is no longer a singular, monastic experience; it has become a collaboration of both virtual paradigms and tangible entities. Students have progressed to a learning environment far exceeding the rigid parameters of our classrooms, moving beyond conformist teaching pedagogies and into a world limited by their own imaginations.

To remain effective as teachers we need to incorporate and expand our use of new technologies, and create a curriculum more in tune with our younger audience. Stand and deliver lecture formats will no longer suffice for teaching, especially when you consider most of our students don't even know what a rotary telephone is. There are many courses of action that we can take to remain current and modish, one in particular is called weblogs.

Weblogs are by no means new, in fact today there are over 112 million blogs worldwide. Weblogs are websites that contain online personal journals with reflections, comments and hyperlinks provided by an administrator. These sites have been growing in popularity at an exponential rate, with over 175,000 new blogs being created each day. This popularity is not just limited to adolescence; in fact in a recent survey conducted by the National Schools Board Association (NSBA) found that over 90% of K-12 teachers were already participating in online educationally related communities. Applications in the classroom for this technology are virtually unlimited, with most sites offering very user friendly software.

One application that has become extremely popular amongst teachers is the virtual classroom. Virtual classrooms come instantly equipped with many advantages that the tangible classroom is unable to offer. Teachers have the ability to upload all relevant class material to their blog, including syllabi, day by day, study guides, the ubiquitous PowerPoint presentations and even video. Students then access to these items 24 hours a day from any location in the world, particularly relevant when you consider how many students have internet subscription through their cell phones. The class curriculum instantly becomes fluid; allowing teachers to update information without the necessity of hard copy documents.

Most weblogs contain posting areas, permitting students and teachers to converse asynchronously without regard to location. Never again will that one student question go unanswered. This virtual classroom also creates a peer free, secure environment, connecting with those students who might feel uncomfortable asking questions during class time. If you enjoy posting and interacting with your students in a non-formal atmosphere you might want to consider an on-line chat room. Many weblogs allow you to generate chat rooms which facilitate real time conversation. All that is required is a preset time for the chat and voila, instant one on one time with your students. My own students have responded very positively to these online chats, so much so that a portion of my curriculum now is based exclusively in this virtual format.

Weblogs also lend themselves naturally to student assignments and homework. Through the integration of weblogs you can turn a staid, static project into a dynamic and exciting document. Teachers are not only able to create individual projects, but also shared projects that can link not just their students, but students in other schools and colleges around the country. Each group can assigned a portion, with an end of course collaboration creating the final document.

Though this type of venture requires plenty of groundwork, the ramifications for student learning seem endless. Second life, an online virtual world is a great example of how effective this collaboration can be. Finally, the obligatory assignment is able to transcend the classroom. Students are able to see their projects not as isolated, but interconnected works that contribute new, real time knowledge to a potential global audience. Every assignment is instantly published with all students becoming accountable for every word, good or bad. Once completed teachers have the capacity to archive the work, which in turn develops into research material for future classes. Each class contributes core knowledge to the curriculum which continues to flux and expand with every passing class.

Weblogs are by no means the only solution in our continued quest for educational excellence. In themselves they achieve little; it is the student and teacher that create the learning experience. In order for these blogs to be effective, teachers need to remain vigilant, nudging students and continuously reiterating the importance of participation. Students will be students and are apt to slack if given the chance. Weblogs ultimately allow the student to actively participate in their own didactic goals, moving the teacher to more of a guide position than institutional sage. They also allow us to connect with our students on an equal if not unconditional level, which in the end creates what we all want to be, successful teachers.