Remediation, Genre, and Motivation: Key Concepts for Teaching with Weblogs

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In a stylish and informative online essay, Barclay Barrios (2003) dubbed 2003 "The Year of the Blog." He makes this claim in light of a) Blogger.com announcing in January of 2003 that it hosts over one million blogs, b) the emergence of presentations about blogging at the 2003 Conference on College Composition and Communication, and c) the interest in blogging that surfaced during Gulf War II. He also describes typical weblog uses in writing classrooms: weblogs as journals, weblogs as research tools, and class weblogs for sharing ideas. These functions can be usefully considered weblog genres (what we call journal, notebook, and filter weblogs) that remediate existing print genres (journals, notebooks, and note cards). The concept of genre, as developed in the work of rhetoric and composition scholars like Carolyn Miller, Charles Bazerman, and Richard Coe, offers a key to understanding both formal features and motivations for weblogging, and their view of genres as dynamic and evolving complements Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's theory of new media: remediation. Our goal in this paper is to bring some greater specificity to, and advance the understanding of, weblogs as educational tools relevant to any class that takes writing and reading seriously.

Weblogging seems like such a potentially rich set of online writing activities because it is relatively low-tech compared to producing hypertext or websites, and it incorporates familiar writing skills like summary, paraphrases, and the development of voice. The mix of generic, technical, and psychological factors clearly grabs and compels some people to weblog extensively, and as teachers of writing, we want to tap into that mix. Rebecca Blood, author of the first print handbook for blogging (2002) and a widely cited history of weblogging (2000), offered a vision of blogging's potential for developing writers. She envisioned that the small community that might start up around a weblogger would encourage that person to continue writing where he or she might otherwise stop, and that readers of weblogs might in turn begin their own blogs and reap similar benefits. Her vision is one that many writing instructors share for their students, whether attained through blogging, journaling, discussion boards, class projects, or other genres:

> As he enunciates his opinions daily, this new awareness of his inner life may develop into a trust in his own perspective. His own reactions—to a poem, to other people, and, yes, to the media— will carry more weight with him. Accustomed to expressing his thoughts on his website, he will be able to more fully articulate his opinions to himself and others. He will become impatient with waiting to see what others think before he decides, and will begin to act in accordance with his inner voice instead. Ideally, he will become less reflexive and more reflective, and find his own opinions and ideas worthy of serious consideration. (2000)

Blood's vision is of the writer without a teacher, the writer who is self-motivated and community supported. We did not expect many, if any students, to be transformed by weblogging quite so radically because we were introducing weblogging as an assigned activity within, in most cases, a required course. Like Jill Walker (2003), we expected to find some students who would love it, some who would simply do their assignments, and others who would hate it. But our hypothesis was that if we could understand what motivated some, and if we could identify formal or psychological barriers for others, we could be more precise in assigning and encouraging weblogging; we could also be clearer about out own expectations for weblogging.

Our research question, then, is "which weblog genre(s) (if any) engage or motivate students to make significant contributions to their personal or class weblog?" Our assumption is that motivated, engaged weblogging will result in stronger writing, but we do not have the space, or clear enough evidence, to offer a specific conclusion on that point. We found that first-year students at our institution were not particularly interested in the academic potential of weblogging, but they were interested in the personal and expressive dimensions. Students in upper level courses, including one graduate level class, reported that they prefer the personal and expressive weblog genres, but the academic potential is clearer to them and more obviously valued.

Key Concepts: Remediation, Genre, Motivation

One of the fundamental principles of new media that directly influenced our teaching and research is the principle that old media and familiar genres end up as the content of new media. Marshall and Eric McLuhan (1988) call this principle the "law of retrieval" (pp. 102-06), Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999) call it "remediation" (pp. 2-15), and Lev Manovich (2001), drawing on the McLuhans and Bolter and Grusin, says, "the language of cultural interfaces is largely made up from elements of other, already familiar cultural forms" (p. 71). The web is remediating all media that has come before it (print, music, film, television, radio, paintings, email, etc.); therefore in our teaching we wanted to emphasize for our students that weblogging is not a radically new way of writing, but a repurposing of familiar (we hoped) print genres. Other theories of or approaches to media, like Gregory Ulmer's theory of electracy and his pedagogy articulated in Internet Invention (2003) might lead to more experimental uses of weblogging than what we encouraged from our students, but rather than emphasize the newness and unfamiliarity of weblogs, we wanted to balance the novelty of the activity with a grounding in familiar literate practices. Bolter and Grusin's response to the "modernist rhetoric" of making a "radical break with the past" sums up our own understanding of new media, including weblogs: "what is new about digital media lies in their particular strategies for remediating television, film, photography, and painting [and print]. Repurposing as remediation is both what is 'unique to digital worlds' and what denies the possibility of that uniqueness" (50).

While the general theory of remediation clarified our own thinking about the two dominant mediums in our writing classes (print and the web), we also needed a more specific way to address the pedagogical problem of teaching aims, forms, styles, and strategies for writing. Genre theory, since Carolyn Miller's watershed essay, "Genre as Social Action" (1984), has supported increasingly flexible genre-based pedagogies attuned to audience, situation, and purpose. Contemporary genre theory has downplayed rigid conventions and repeatable, predictable formats. Charles Bazerman (1997), who has studied the writing of scientists, children, college students, to name only a few of his subjects, invokes a set of travel metaphors that can be applied to students writing weblog genres: "When we travel to new communicative domains, we construct our perception of them beginning with the forms we know. Even our motives and desires to participate in what the new landscape appears to offer start from motives and desires framed in earlier landscapes" (p. 19). We noticed in our own weblogging that we immediately gravitated to the kinds of print genres that have motivated us in the past: Brooks, a professor of rhetoric and composition, wrote filter entries reminiscent of the scholarly notes he has compiled the last 10 years. Nichols, a creative writer with an emphasis in contemporary poetry, started exploring the poetics of blogging in her new digital notebook. Priebe, a former high school teacher and long time diarist, started writing a mix of teaching notes and personal journal entries. Simply modeling forms (diary, notebook, note cards) will potentially help students produce the external formal features we as teachers might desire, but exploring and tapping in to students' "motives and desires" is going to be essential to using weblogging as an innovative and transformative activity, and not just another assignment.

Our study focuses on survey data and responses to open-ended questions because motives and desires are not obvious in assigned writing tasks. Richard Coe (1994), working out of the same rhetorical tradition as Miller and Bazerman, says that "any reader, writer or teacher of reading or writing" should work with "genres that matter to her or him. For thus can the tyranny of genre be overthrown and the 'utterly dismal' study of organization become utterly fascinating, liberating, and empowering rhetoric of form and genre" (p. 187). The implications of Coe's work, however, is not simply that we should always tap students' desires and motivations, but that we as teachers might be able to convince students that certain weblog genres should matter to them, and that "genres strategically embody attitudes, values, and ways of doing" (Coe, 2002, p. 3).

As instructors, we should not overlook our own motivations and desires, and how those expectations are manifest in genres. Janet Giltrow (2002) summarizes two cases where instructors asked students to write in what she calls "novel genres" (i.e., unfamiliar genres), and in both cases the instructors had not been able to articulate that they were looking for a new kind of discourse, a dialogic discourse. What the instructors got instead were elements of genres that were more formal and less formal than what they were looking for: "essay-discourse" and "email discourse" (pp. 197-98). Brooks was initially frustrated by students' seeming unwillingness to write filter-entries, but he has since come to understand the complexity of that genre and the appeal of the journal weblog.

Our assumption is, like Rebecca Blood's, that an engaged and motivated weblog writer will become a better writer of other genres, better able to represent him or herself in writing, but of course that assumption can be opened up and examined by other scholars. We focused on remediation, genre, and motivation because we were aware that weblogging as it is being practiced outside the academy has an energy or appeal that classroom applications have the potential to kill, and the long-terms success of weblogging in education will require a nuanced understanding of where our students are coming from—in terms of genre and motivation—and where we would like them to go.

Research and Teaching Methods

We investigated the relationship between remediated genres and student motivation over two semesters, Fall 2002 and Spring 2003, working with the classes each of us taught. We designed and used the same initial and exit survey both semesters, and will draw our analysis from the survey data. In the fall, we had 100 students respond to the initial survey and 84 respond to the exit survey; in the spring we had 65 and 61. In the initial survey we were particularly interested in finding out students' familiarity with the three print genres we saw being remediated in weblogs, and we wanted to know how familiar they were with weblogs. In the exit surveys we asked which genres they were drawn to, why, and we asked whether or not they found weblogging to be a motivating activity.

In the fall of 2002, all three of us were teaching English 110, the first of two required first-year composition courses at North Dakota State University. Our sections took as their general theme "exploring new literacy," and introducing students to weblogging was just one way in which we engaged our students in new literacy practices and reflections. We assigned as our first major paper the question: "Weblogs: what's the use?", so students were being asked to try weblogging, read about issues related to new literacy, and then make a proposal for potential uses or limitations of weblogging in education. We have not drawn on those papers because the exigency of the writing situation seemed to skew students towards positive proposals, while the survey data suggests positive, but less enthusiastic results. One student essay that we are aware of is still posted on the web. A complete list of links can be found at the end of this essay.

We spent quite a bit of time offering guidelines, tips and examples, including an explicit definition of journal, notebook, and filter weblogging for our students. Our definitions were modifications on Rebecca Bloods' definitions of:

- "blogs" (what we call journals): "short-form journals. The writer's subject is his daily life, with links subordinate to the text,"
- notebooks: "Sometimes personal, sometimes focused on the outside world, notebooks are distinguished from blogs [journals] by their longer pieces of focused content," and
- filters: "organized squarely around the link, maintained by an inveterate Web surfer, personal information strictly optional" (pp. 6-8).

We maintained individual weblogs as a way of filtering websites relevant to the course, sharing notes and ideas, and as a way of modeling weblogging. During the first week of classes, we asked students to set up and maintain a personal weblog on either Blogger.com or Xanga.com, but we didn't introduce community (class) weblogs until later in the semester.

We encouraged students to use weblogging throughout the rest of the semester, even after they had completed the "Weblogs: what's the use?" assignment, but we took the approach that if weblogging is going to motivate and support writing, it needs to be student driven, not assignment drive. All three of us were frustrated at times by students' reticent and tentativeness, and then pleasantly surprised to see that weblogs were generally well received, as indicated in the exit survey. We kept a reasonably detailed teaching/research weblog during the fall semester, but we were less diligent in maintaining the log during the spring semester.

In the spring of 2003, we had the opportunity to try weblogging in a wider range of courses, but we used roughly the same definitional materials, and continued to teach weblogging through examples and encouragement, with only minimal requirements. Priebe taught two sections of English 120, the second semester composition courses at NDSU. Priebe maintained her teaching weblog, used one community weblog for her two classes in order to create a multi-sectioned conversation, and encouraged students to maintain personal weblogs. She asked students to blog and write about controversial social issues.

Nichols taught "Poetry of Rock" (a 200-level course) and "Creative Writing II" (a 300 level course), she maintained her own teaching weblog and encouraged students to explore weblogging as a possible tool for their writing and research. The blogs were primarily used as notebooks (for brief assignments) and as message boards (people needing notes, rides home, etc.). In Creative Writing, she encouraged but did not require creative uses of the blogs.

Brooks taught "Introduction to Writing Studies" (a 200 level course) and "Composition Theory," a graduate course, and used class weblogs to share responses to readings, share links, and build community. He maintained his teaching weblog and used two community weblogs to support his two courses.

A myriad of factors obviously complicate the numbers that we will report in the next section. The three of us have very different teaching and weblogging styles, a wide gap in teaching experience (20 years, 12 years, 5 years), and we taught very different kinds of students, especially in the Spring 2003 semester. Nichols had a particularly chaotic semester due to health problems. We used basic, free, weblogging tools (Blogger and Xanga) and did not offer students some of the more sophisticated features that can found on other weblogging software. But the generally positive response to weblogging that emerges despite these differences suggests that as the genres and motives for weblogging are understood more clearly, the practices has sufficient cultural and pedagogical appeal to encourage and motivate student writing even in a post-literate age.

Results from Survey and Observation

Our initial and exit surveys had 29 and 20 questions respectively, but we will report on the following paraphrased questions, as they pertain to answering our driving questions about which weblog genre(s) motivate students to write. The set of questions relevant to this paper are included in an appendix.

1. How familiar were students with weblogging in the fall of 2002, spring of 2003?
2. How familiar were students with the print genres that weblogging, as we were presenting it to students, remediates?
3. Which genre of weblog did students prefer to write?

We asked open-ended follow-up questions to a number of the closed, discrete questions, and the responses to those questions were coded by the principal investigator into categorical responses. An example will be explained below. While the coding is obviously interpretive and not validated by outside readers, the open-ended questions did generate responses that we would not have anticipated, and therefore this particular strategy was appropriate for this exploratory study. We are able to report responses by instructor in the spring semester, but we did not build that option into the data collection for the fall semester.

1. How familiar were students with weblogging in the Fall of 2002, Spring of 2003?
In order to determine whether or not weblogging was a familiar activity for our students, we asked them to choose one of five options that would best describe their knowledge of or experience with weblogs. In the fall, only two had kept a weblog (2%), and only twenty-one (21%) had heard of weblogs.

	Fall 2002	**Spring 2003**
Never heard of them before this class.	79 (79%)	34 (52%)
Heard of them, but never kept one or read one.	10 (10%)	8 (12%)
Read some, but have not kept one.	9 (9%)	5 (8%)
Have read and kept a weblog for less than a year.	1 (1%)	15 (23%)
Have read and kept a weblog for more than a year.	1 (1%)	3 (5%)

Table 1. Familiarity with weblogs, Fall and Spring initial survey results.

In the spring semester, the numbers looked very different, with 18 (28%) students reporting that they had read or kept a weblog, and almost half (48%) of the 65 students having at least heard of weblogs. Our own teaching and research was somewhat responsible for pushing these numbers up: six of the students who kept weblogs were graduate students in the NDSU Master's program in English, where weblogs have been discussed and used, and most of the other 12 were students who had taken English 110 with one of the three co-authors. As students' become more familiar with weblogging, our pedagogical emphasis on teaching weblog genres as

remediations of print genres will likely give away to an emphasis on teaching academic and personal weblogging genres, and teaching weblogging genres as part of a system of online genres that have fairly porous boundaries.

2. How familiar were students with the print genres that weblogging, as we were presenting it to students, remediate?
We asked our students how familiar they were with each print genre that we were offering as guideposts, and then in an open-ended question, asked them what values that they associated with each genre.

	Fall 2002		Spring 2003	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Kept a Personal Journal	60	40	49	19
	(60%)	(40%)	(72%)	(18%)
Kept an Academic Notebook	36	63	38	27
	(36%)	(64%)	(58%)	(42%)
Kept Note Cards	75	25	40	24
	(75%)	(25%)	(62.5%)	(37.5%)

Table 2: Familiarity with print genres weblogs remediate, Fall and Spring initial survey results.

Different numbers of students responded to each open ended question, and after looking at the responses, we decided that our participants were identifying emotional, intellectual, record-keeping, creative, and practical motivations for keeping journals, notebooks, or note cards. The respondents sometimes simply described how the genre had been used, without suggesting a value, and some identified the assigned genre as a pain or inconvenience. Many responses identified more than one motivation, so we coded those types of responses as reflecting two motivations. For example, one student wrote that journals "help me with problems I have, [emotional motivation] and sometimes it [is] nice to look back and see what was going on in my life a couple yrs. ago" [record keeping motivation].

In both semesters, personal journals were identified as reasonably familiar genres with generally positive connotations. The three most common reasons for keeping a journal were:
Emotional value (22 /47 fall; 27/44 spring),

- "The benefits of journaling for me are so I don't keep things bottled up. I started it when my dad passed away on March 9th, because I was so angry. It is kind of my way of venting, and expressing how I really feel."
- "A benefit of journaling allows a person to reflect on their life and use the paper as a sort of shoulder to cry on or a private ear to hear secrets."

Keeping a record of one's life (20/47 fall; 17/44 spring)

- "fun to look back on and see what was going on in your life at that certain time"
- "I think it would just be cool to be able to look back and reflect on how my days were back when I was younger. Especially after I'm married and settled down with having kids."

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Intellectual value (16/47 fall; 17/44 spring).

- "You get to acknowledge your thoughts and ideas on paper. Which is a strong tool. It also builds your writing skills."
- "The integration of thoughts and ideas through instant and dynamic conversation. [and] [b]reaking down social barriers and placing more emphasis on individuals' intellect and ingenuity."

The answers to the open-ended question suggest the ways in which a single genre (journal) can be used for many purposes, and that one individual might see a variety of motives in a genre. We will elaborate on the power and potential of journaling within academic settings in the discussion section of this paper, but one of our assumptions was that students familiar with journaling would have a frame of reference or guidepost for weblogging.

The academic notebook was more familiar to the spring students (58%) than the fall students (38%), perhaps because half of those students were in at least their second year of college. Sixteen of thirty eight (16/38) participants in the spring characterized responding to readings or prompts as having intellectual value, while only 5/33 respondents in the fall identified an intellectual value in keeping an academic notebook. On what might be considered the inverse value, the practical, functional value of an academic notebook, 12/38 students in the fall said they found the activity to be of practical value ("reviewing," "recalling," and "collecting notes" were frequently cited), while only 4/33 mentioned this practical value in the Spring. The tendency for first-year students to see notebooks primarily as a functional genre suggests that the intellectual dimensions might need to be stressed and encouraged, while the tendency for upper-level students to see the intellectual rather than functional value in notebooks suggests an acceptance or recognition of the value of putting one's thoughts on a page or screen. One student made a clear contrast between high school and college academic journaling: "In high school I felt that the journal was a waste of time, but the college journals actually open my eyes." While the student used the word "journal," this statement was a response to our question about the value of keeping an academic notebook.

Although the note card turned out to be a familiar genre for our students, 13/74 in the fall said it was of no benefit, "a hassle," or "I pretty much hated doing it." Twenty-one of seventy-four said that note cards functioned effectively as memory aids or prompts when writing papers, while the value of note cards for organizing a paper was mentioned 19 times. Spring participants identified the organizational value as the top benefit (14/39), with memory aid (9/39) and no benefit (8/39) as second and third. Familiarity with a genre is obviously no guarantee that working in that genre will be perceived positively, or that the genre can work to motivate or engage a writer.

3. Which genre of weblog did students prefer to write?
In a series of four questions, we asked students generally if weblogging motivated them to write for our classes, for personal fulfillment, for school work in general, or for life tasks in general.

	Fall 2002		Spring 2003	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Did weblogging motivate you to write for your class assignments?	55	29	36	24
	(65%)	(35%)	(60%)	(40%)
Did weblogging motivate you to write for your personal satisfaction?	53	31	28	31
	(63%)	(37%)	(47%)	(53%)

Did weblogging motivate you to write for any school-related task?	48 (57%)	36 (43%)	36 (60%)	25 (40%)
Did weblogging motivate you to write for any life-related task?	48 (58%)	35 (42%)	20 (33%)	40 (67%)

The 65% and 60% positive responses to writing for our classes suggests modest success, and the fall semester students in every category showed that a small majority of students found the activity to be motivating. We have no benchmark for measuring the success of weblogging relative to freewriting or note card taking as a motivating activity, but the initial results suggest the activity is worth pursuing, the pedagogical understanding and techniques worth developing.

When we asked more specifically which weblog genre students preferred to write, the familiarity with print journals seemed to translate into a preference for journal weblogging, but the familiarity with note cards did not translate into a preference for filter weblogging.

	Fall 2002		Spring 2003	
	Preferred genre	Percentage	Preferred genre	Percentage*
Journal	52	63 %	38	N/A
Notebook	11	13%	24	N/A
Filter	10	12%	10	N/A
Would rather not weblog	10	12%	12	20%

*In our survey instrument, we allowed respondents to choose more than one genre in the spring 2003, so percentages other than "would rather not weblog" are not valid. We assume that anyone who chose "would rather not weblog" would not have chosen any of the other genres. We collected data on students from each instructor's class, but not from individual courses, in order to protect the anonymity of students.

	Spring 2003		
	Priebe	Nichols	Brooks
	Preferred genre	Preferred genre	Preferred genre
Journal	15	17	8
Notebook	12	6	7
Filter	3	3	5
Would rather not weblog	2	9	1

Percentage are not applicable because students could choose more than one genre.

In response to the open-ended question which asked students to elaborate on the ways in which weblogging motivated them to write, 34 / 75 fall students identified an emotional value ("getting stuff off my chest"), while only 21/75 students identified the intellectual value and 23/75 students identified a practical value. Sixteen students said that weblogging did not motivate them to write for class or personal satisfaction.

A few students commented specifically on the remediation of a print genre.

- "Free writing is my favorite type of writing. Weblogging, for me, was free writing. It was fun to be able to write when you wanted and what you wanted. I like sharing my opinions about things, and weblogging is a good tool for doing so."
- "it made me more comfortable and confident in my writing b/c i would write "like" i was the only person who was going to read it.... b/c it felt like a journal, but then actually it was on a site where other people could read it too."

The first-year students in the Spring semester repeated this pattern, although in less pronounced terms: 9/18 identified an emotional value, 7/18 identified an intellectual value, 4/18 found it to be of practical value, and 4 did not find it to be motivating. Brooks' students elaborated on the intellectual (8/13), the practical (5/13), and the emotional motivation (3/13). Nichols' students still identified the intellectual value more often than other values (9/24), followed by emotional motivation (8/24), and practical motivation (7/24). Eight students explicitly stated that weblogging did not motivate them to write.

The preference for the journal weblog among first-semester freshman is particularly pronounced, although the persistence of its popularity is also noteworthy and will receive attention in the next section. When given the opportunity to choose "would rather not weblog" from among the genre choices, relatively few students chose that option. Thirty-five percent of the fall students said that weblogging did not motivate them to write for class, but only 12% said that they would rather not weblog. Forty percent of spring students said that weblogging did not motivate them to write for class, but only 20% said they would rather not weblog. We will elaborate on the motivating power of technology in the next section as well, as a possible answer to this discrepancy in what students have reported.

Discussion: Five Points

Our results are drawn from one school year of studying weblogging in one institution with a homogenous student body. Our study is exploratory, but that said, we have survey and observation results that should be relevant to any instructor interested in using weblogs to support a traditional face-to-face course. Many of our results match up with prevalent beliefs about writing instruction, and we will connect our discussion to some of that literature. There are good pedagogical tip sheets available online, so we want to elaborate on the relevance of understanding "remediation," "genres," and "motivation," through five points.

1. Familiarity with a genre does not necessarily correspond to motivation.
Students in both the fall (75%) and spring (62.5%) reported being familiar with note cards as an academic genre, but only 10 students each semester (12% and N/A) reported that writing filter entries were their preferred weblogging genre. It also seems likely that with weblogging, familiarity with print genres is perhaps less important than we originally thought. Motivation to weblog is a mix of desires to express one's self online, to communicate with others, and to take advantage of a technology that is perceived to make work easier and more efficient.

2. The preference for journal weblogging is a generic issue (in terms of form and motivation) that instructors will want to heed.
In both semesters, our students preferred the journal weblog regardless of which course they were enrolled in, and as student awareness of weblogging increases, the personal, daily reflection seems likely to be the defining characteristic of weblogging. As academics, we might be more comfortable and familiar with notebook weblogs and filter-weblogs, but our students coming out of high school are likely to know the genre as an expressive and social space. Rather than work entirely against the grain of the dominant weblog genre, instructors in any discipline might draw on scholarship in rhetoric and composition that values freewriting and sharing. Peter

Elbow (1981), a leading advocate of both practices, recommends ten minutes of freewriting each day in order to help students learn to "separate the producing process from the revising process," to develop the habit of writing "even when you don't feel like writing" and, quite simply, to "improve your writing" (pp. 14-15). He makes it clear that freewriting (or weblogging) might not be good writing, but it taps into energy, a voice, a power, that most writers will not get to without freewriting regularly (p. 16).

3. The notebook genre seems likely to be most successful in a community or team weblog where ideas and entries are receiving responses.

In the fall semester, when we started with individual weblogs rather than a community weblog, students reported a sense of writing into a vacuum, and their survey results show that only 13 students (12%) identified notebooks as their preferred weblog genre. In the spring semester, Priebe and Brooks used a community weblog, and students in those classes reported almost as much interested in the notebook as in the journal (17 identified journals and 15 identified notebooks as preferred genres for Priebe, eight journals and seven notebooks for Brooks). Nichols did not use a class weblog, and 17 reported a preference for the journal entry, only six for the notebook genre. In open-ended comments, students said they enjoyed having a chance to "communicate with people" and share ideas. The notebook genre may not be immediately familiar to students, and previous experiences may initially be a deterrent, but an informative, animated class weblog that focuses on notebook entries has the potential to motivate reluctant or hesitant students to contribute.

4. The complexity of the filter entry cannot be overlooked, nor can the need for extremely high level of motivation when working with this genre.

The filter or note card weblog holds little appeal for students, even though the print genre being remediated is familiar to large numbers of students. For many teachers, this might be the weblog genre that holds the most academic potential, but if instructors want students to write filter entries, they need to recognize the complexity of this task. The writer needs a strong sense of motivation and interest in a topic and a basic knowledge of the topic, and needs to know how to search the web effectively, to determine whether or not the site found is worth commenting on and sharing (whether good, bad, interesting, or provocative), to read effectively, to summarize and paraphrase, to link within the weblog software he/she is using, and how to write effectively for an audience that may be only slightly known (classmates and professor), or even unknown and abstract (a web surfer). Scholars in rhetoric and composition like Bazerman (1997) and Russell (1995) have been articulating the ways that writing in genres that on the surface seem to have obvious, easy-to-follow conventions, often have subterranean histories that complicate readers' and writers' expectations and practices. The formal elements of this weblog genre are not particularly complicated, but if students are not what Blood calls "inveterate web surfers" (p. 8), if they do not bring a desire or motivation to researching and writing about a course topic, they are unlikely to thrive as filter weblog writers.

5. Working with technology (regardless of genre) has the potential to motivate student writers.

We did not ask a specific question about whether working online or writing for the web was an engaging or motivating component of the use of weblogs, but the open-ended comments brought this issue to the surface. Eleven students in the fall specifically said that working online made writing assignments "easier," often because they were online frequently, could make a note, or save a link to a website. One student identified writing weblogs as a "chance to get more familiarized with the Internet and computer skills" and another said, "Weblogging motivated me to learn computers better." One student was quite articulate about the ways in which the technology de-centered the class, although the comment did not focus much on the technology:

> Writing on the weblog, whether it was for an assignment, or just a note to the class, was different than writing things in class. In class, if a professor asks the students to write a response to some reading, or an idea, the only ones involved in the process are the student and the professor. Weblogs allow the entire class to communicate, and this made me feel like my education was not just in the hands of my professor, but was a collective effort of everyone in the class.

Some of these same benefits can be achieved through Course Management Systems or listservs, but writing instructors, like Alice Trupe (2002), generally report that students are motivated to write when working with communication technologies.

Perhaps the greatest benefit [of a wired classroom] is students' engagement in their work in electronic environments. Most students enjoy using computers even to write essays, and incorporation of MOOs, bulletin boards, and email in the writing classroom generally results in more interest in participation and, therefore, the production of more text. These benefits are likely goals we have for students in any classroom environment. (Trupe 2002)

Conclusion

Weblogging is no panacea for writing instruction, nor for engendering greater course participation among students. But our initial study has convinced us that weblogging as a general writing activity is worth pursuing in college courses, and that understanding the wide range of generic knowledge students bring to weblogging will help instructors orient and motivate students in the use of weblogs. Our specific findings and claims are:

- Journal weblogging is likely to remediate a familiar print genre that has positive connotations, but the prevalence of this online genre will likely cause a certain amount of generic interference for instructors asking students to write notebook or filter weblogs.
- Notebook weblogging is more likely to succeed as a genre within a collaborative weblog than when assigned as an individual weblog project. Notebook weblogs might take as their guidepost online discussion boards rather than print notebooks.
- Filter weblogs have the potential to be an intellectually rich genre for students to work with, but their complexity is buried beneath a deceptively simple presentation of link(s) and analysis.

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Appendix A

Weblogs and websites relevant to this study

The Comp Blog: collaborative research notebook.

http://110blogproject.blogspot.com

Brooks' *Teaching Blog*: course and research materials. http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/ndsu/kbrooks/blog/

Brooks' Comp Theory weblog: community weblog.

http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/ndsu/kbrooks/theory.html

Brooks' Introduction to Writing Studies weblog: community weblog.

http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/ndsu/kbrooks/blogger.html

Nichols' Creative Blog, *Footsteps of a Snake*:

http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/instruct/cinichol/BlogStuff/Snake.htm

Nichols' teacher blog, *Nichols'
Blog*:http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/instruct/cinichol/Classes/English120/NicholsBlog.htm

Nichols' Fall 2003 English 120 homepage:

http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/instruct/cinichol/Classes/English120/index.htm

Nichols' Spring 2003 English 323 student blogs:

http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/instruct/cinichol/Classes/CreativeWriting/StudentBlogs.htm

Nichols' Spring 2003 English 226 student blogs:

http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/instruct/cinichol/Classes/PoetryofRock/Blogs.htm

Priebe's Teacher Blog: http://www.xanga.com/home.aspx?user=teacher47

Priebe's Fall 2002 English 110 homepage.

http://sybilisticism.tripod.com/syllabus.html

Preibe's Spring 2003 English 120 homepage http://sybilisticism.tripod.com/syllabus120v2.html

Priebe' Spring 2003 community class weblog

http://english120ndsu.blogspot.com/

"Weblogs: what's the use?" Fall 2002 Assignment.

http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/ndsu/kbrooks/110/assignment1.html

Student Porfolio, Fall 2002.

http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/ndsu/kbrooks/110/assignment1.html

Practical guides to weblogging

Hastings, Pattie Belle. "Blogging Across the
Curriculum." http://mywebspace.quinnipiac.edu/PHastings/bac.html.

Brown, Randy. "Do you Blog? Weblogs for Educatators." http://kairosnews.org/node/view/3451

Araujo, Andre. "Blogging 101." http://blogging101.trigearproductions.com/

Survey questions

Initial survey

1. Have you ever kept a personal journal?
2. What do you see as the benefits, if any, of journaling?
3. Have you ever been asked to keep an academic journal or notebook? (This would include being asked to reflect regularly on the course content in fairly short, informal ways.)
4. If yes, please describe your academic journaling activities, and explain what benefits, if any, you saw in doing this kind of writing.
5. Have you ever been asked to keep note cards (3X5 cards), or use a similar research tool, when writing papers?
6. If yes, describe the kind of note taking you were asked to use, and explain what benefits, if any, you saw in doing this kind of writing.
7. Please rate your familiarity with weblogs.

- Never heard of them before this class.
- Heard of them, but never kept one or read one before
- Read some, but have not kept one.
- Have read and kept a weblog for less than a year.
- Have read and kept a weblog for more than a year.

Exit survey

1. Did weblogging motivate you to write for your class assignments?
2. Did weblogging motivate you to write for your personal satisfaction?
3. Did weblogging motivate you to write for any school-related task?
4. Did weblogging motivate you to write for any life-related task?
5. Which genre of weblog did you prefer to write?

- Journal (personal reflection/observation)
- Notebook (reflecting on an issue related to class,
- Filter (Linking to, or at least referring to, some
- Would rather not weblog

6. Please describe in detail the ways weblogging motivated you to write.