

Becoming a Digital Publisher

In today's digital age, anyone can publish anything to the Web at any time—including you! This ability is nothing short of empowering, ensuring that your voice can be heard without cost. As Clay Shirky wrote in his 2008 title, *Here Comes Everybody*:

“In a world where publishing is effortless, the decision to publish something isn't terribly momentous. Just as movable type raised the value of being able to read and write even as it destroyed the scribal tradition, globally free publishing is making public speech and action more valuable even as it...diminishes the specialness of professional publishing.”

All that's needed is a few good ideas and some basic word processing skills!

Where to Begin:

Advanced Writers

If you're already confident in your ability as a writer, consider starting your own blog. I know, I know--it sounds intimidating, doesn't it? How can you possibly figure out how to post information on the internet? You're not one of those die-hard techie-types that eats and breathes HTML, XML or HTTP.

The good news is that you don't have to be! Most blog services are ridiculously easy to use. After you create an account, you'll be working in windows that look like any word processing application that you've ever explored. You'll see comfortable toolbars that allow you to change your fonts, add links, and center your content. When you're done writing, click on a "publish" button and your work is automatically posted to the web.

Blog Services:

Typepad (<http://www.typepad.com>): While Typepad is a paid blogging service, it may be worth the investment because it comes with a broad range of tech support and file storage options that free blogging services don't always provide. For an example of a Typepad blog, check out The Tempered Radical: http://teacherleaders.typepad.com/the_tempered_radical.

Blogger (<http://www.blogger.com>): The main advantage of Blogger is that it is a Google product, so you know it's never going away! What's even better is that Google users only need one username and password to sign in for all of their Google services—which makes it as close as you can get to one-stop shopping for digital tools. For an example of a Blogger blog, check out The Fischbowl: <http://thefischbowl.blogspot.com/>

Edublogs (<http://www.edublogs.org>): Edublogs is one of the only blogging services that is completely dedicated to educational users. The advantage of creating your own digital home with Edublogs is that you'll be instantly connected to a community of like-minded writers who you might just be able to convert into readers! For an example of an Edublogs blog, check out In Practice: <http://inpractice.edublogs.org/>

Intermediate Writers

If you're just beginning to dip your toes into the digital waters, consider working with peers on a collaborative writing wiki. Wikis are editable websites, and like blogs, they require very little technical skill to master. Wiki toolbars also look just like common word processing programs---and when you're finished saving a contribution to a wiki page, your work is posted online automatically.

The difference between a wiki and a blog is that wikis are designed for collaboration between groups of users. The content on a wiki can be edited at any time by anyone with the shared wiki password. Wikis also provide discussion boards for every page, allowing users to engage in ongoing conversations with one another about the quality of their developing project.

For novice writers, these features can be invaluable. Consider finding a few peers and writing bits about teaching and learning together. Divide selections into sections and have each member of your collaborative writing group take responsibility for small contributions. Allow users fluent with language to polish your final text. Find members that are sticklers for spelling and grammar and turn them loose!

By doing so, the writing process becomes far less intimidating because you're not responsible for an entire selection all by yourself. Instead, you'll be reflecting together---which in and of itself is a powerful form of professional growth.

Wiki Services:

PB Wiki (<http://pbwiki.com>): PB Wiki is quickly becoming one of the most popular wiki services for educators because it is just plain easy to use. Even novices will feel at home while working with PB Wiki---guaranteed! For an example of what PB Wikis look like, check out Stay Current: <http://staycurrent.pbwiki.com>.

Wikispaces (<http://www.wikispaces.com>): Wikispaces was one of the first wiki services to be embraced by educators. As a result, there are literally thousands of Wikispaces that you can look to for samples of what's possible. For an example of what Wikispaces look like, check out Digiteen: <http://digiteen.wikispaces.com/>

Wet Paint (<http://www.wetpaint.com>): Wet Paint is one of the newest wiki services available to educators, but it is also one of the most intriguing. With an emphasis on tools for collaboration and professional templates, Wet Paint wikis will make you look good! For an example of what Wet Paint wikis look like, check out the Anatowiki: <http://anatowiki.wetpaint.com/>

Additional Resources:

For more information about using digital tools in education, check out the following resources:

The Tempered Radical http://tinyurl.com/6e5b66 The blog of session presenter Bill Ferriter, the Tempered Radical includes dozens of interesting posts about Web 2.0 tools in teaching and learning.	Digitally Speaking http://digitallyspeaking.pbwiki.com This wiki houses a collection of presentation materials that Bill Ferriter uses to introduce teachers to blogs, wikis and other Web 2.0 tools.
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