



Museums 2.0

A Survey of Museum Blogs &
Community-Based Sites

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Summary and Methodology

The purpose of this survey was to get a sense of the level of activity within the museum field when it comes to blogging and developing community-based sites. While conducting research for various papers and presentations, we couldn't find a single source anywhere that contained all of this information.

A number of sites included here were quite helpful in pointing us to additional museum blogs and sites. In particular, the *Walker New Media Initiatives Blog* (one of six that the Walker Art Center Hosts) and *Mario Bucolo Museums Blog*, were great sources. To a certain extent these two very different blogs are representative of what we found. The Walker Blog is over a year old, is made up of six separate blogs, has multiple contributors, and is sanctioned by a museum. Mario Bucolo's blog is just two months old and is a personal blog focusing on museums. As you'll see, the sites listed here are quite diverse in how they operate and who they serve.

In terms of sheer numbers, museums have been slow to develop blogs and community sites. Along with following links from site to site, we searched various Web and blog search engines. We found a total of 26 sites that are either produced by museums for the public, or that focus on what museums do. *Technorati*, a popular blog search engine claims it searches 29.6 million blogs (as of March 3, 2006). Apparently, museum blogs are literally one-in-a-million.

What constitutes a museum blog or a community-site? We looked for sites that use the "blog format" and software, as well as ones that encourage visitor comments and participation. We considered sites that are either hosted by museums or focused at least in part on museum-related issues.

Two sites, Ontario Science Centre's *RedShift Now* and Science Museum of Minnesota's *Science Buzz* stand out as being a bit different than the others. Both are multifaceted, but include some of the community-based features we were looking for.

Three of the sites have not been updated in the last three months. One of the blogs, *Museums and Web* (which apparently after it launched found out that it shared its name with a popular conference) explicitly states that it is no longer posting. The majority listed here are active sites.

Search Engines Used

Google www.google.com, blogsearch.google.com

Technorati www.technorati.com

Feedster www.feedster.com

Ice Rocket www.icerocket.com

What We Looked For

Name The name of the blog or site

Institution The name of the museum

Entry Dates The first and last entry

Comments Could visitors add comments?

Contributors Individual or multiple

Powered By What software was used?

Survey List: Art Museums

Name	Institution	First Entry	Last Entry	Allows Comments	Contributors	Powered by
Tacoma Art Museum Docents Blog http://tamdocents.blogspot.com	Tacoma Art Museum	May '04	Mar '06	yes	31	Blogger
Goldwell Open Air Museum Blog http://www.goldwellmuseum.org/guestblog/blogger.html	Goldwell Open Air Museum	Nov '04	Oct '05	yes	multiple	Blogger
Walker Blogs (6 blogs) http://blogs.walkerart.org	Walker Art Center	Feb '05	Mar '06	yes	individual	WordPress
Bronx Mus(eum)ings http://www.bronxmuseum.blogspot.com	Bronx Museum	Mar '05	Oct '05	yes	individual	Blogger
Art @ the Katzen http://art_at_thekatzen.typepad.com/art_thekatzen	The Katzen Arts Center at American University	Mar '05	Mar '06	yes	individual	TypePad
NCMA Blog http://www.ncmoa.org/blog	North Carolina Museum of Art	Apr '05	May '05	yes	multiple	Moveable Type
Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts http://www.contemporary-pulitzer.blogs.com	Contemporary Art Museum - St. Louis	Jun '05	Mar '06	yes	multiple	TypePad

Survey List: Art Museums *continued*

Name	Institution	First Entry	Last Entry	Allow Comments	Contributors	Powered by
Eye Level http://eyelevel.si.edu	Smithsonian American Art Museum	Sep '05	Mar '06	yes	multiple	TypePad

Survey List: Children's Museums

Name	Institution	First Entry	Last Entry	Allow Comments	Contributors	Powered by
The Children's Museum Blog http://thechildrensmuseumblog.blog-city.com	Du Page Children's Museum	Apr '05	Feb '06	no	individual	Blog-City

Survey List: History Museums

Name	Institution	First Entry	Last Entry	Allow Comments	Contributors	Powered by
Port Moody Station Museum Blog http://portmoodystationmuseum.blogspot.com	Port Moody Station Museum	Jun '04	Feb '06	yes	individual	Blogger
Dallas History Forum http://www.dallashistory.blogspot.com	Dallas Historical Society	Jan '06	Jan '06	yes	individual	Blogger

Survey List: Science Museums

Name	Institution	First Entry	Last Entry	Allow Comments	Contributors	Powered by
Red Shift Now	Ontario Science Center	Mar '05	Mar '06	yes	multiple	"custom"
http://www.redshiftnow.ca						
Science Buzz	Science Museum of Minnesota	Nov '04	Mar '06	yes	multiple	Drupal
http://lrc.smm.org/buzz						

Survey List: Museum Related

Name	Institution	First Entry	Last Entry	Allow Comments	Contributors	Powered by
Museum Guru		Jun '02	Jan '06	yes	individual	Blogger
http://museumguru.blogspot.com						
Museum People's Journal		Aug '03	Mar '06	yes	multiple	Live-Journal
http://community.livejournal.com/museumpeople						
TechStyle		Mar '05	Mar '06	yes	individual	TypePad
http://techstyle.typepad.com						

Survey List: **Museum Related** *continued*

Name	Institution	First Entry	Last Entry	Allows Comments	Contributors	Powered by
Assembly	Museums Australia	Jun '05	Feb '06	yes	multiple	WordPress
http://maeg.textdriven.com						
Hanging Together	RLG	Aug '05	Feb '06	yes	multiple	WordPress
http://www.hangingtogether.org						
The Curator's Egg		Aug '05	Feb '06	yes	individual	WordPress
http://www.redbadge.co.uk/egg						
Museums and the Web		Sep '05	Dec '05	yes	individual	Blogger
http://museumsandtheweb.blogspot.com						
Mode		Nov '05	Mar '06	yes	multiple	Blogger
http://www.m-o-d-e.net						
Skillful Minds		Nov '05	Jan '06	yes	individual	unknown
http://www.skilfulminds.com						
Museum Pro		Nov '05	Mar '06	yes	multiple	WordPress
http://museumpro.org						

Survey List: **Museum Related** *continued*

Name	Institution	First Entry	Last Entry	Allows Comments	Contributors	Powered by
Ideum Blog	Ideum	Jan '06	Mar '06	yes	multiple	WordPress
http://www.ideum.com/blog						
Mario Bucolo Museums Blog		Feb '06	Mar '06	yes	individual	WordPress
http://www.mariobucolo.com/mb						

Conclusion and Comments

With such a small number of museum blogs and community sites, it is difficult to draw too many conclusions, but there were some findings worth sharing.

As we stated in the *Summary*, the diversity of these sites was the most striking feature. Museums (and others) used their blogs to report on the latest exhibitions, to share photos and video of museums and installations, to explore current events in science, and even to organize docents.

Almost all of the blogs allowed visitor comments (but that was also one of the criteria for deciding which sites should be included). The blogs were about evenly split among those that were run by individuals and those managed by groups.

There was no clear software preference. The sites listed are “powered” by a variety software packages.

The majority of the sites, 20 out of 26 listed here began in 2005 or early this year. With roughly one third coming online between September 2005 and February 2006.

Finally, these early adopters with their variety of approaches can help others in the field, as they begin to develop blogs and community sites. Maybe next year, museum blogs won't be one-in-a-million.

Corrections? Comments? Omissions? Please send them to, Jim Spadaccini, jims@ideum.com

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