

## Blogging Basics

By Joni Sensel, author of *Reality Leak* (Henry Holt, April 2007)

Blogging — the very word, replete with implications of Internet savvy, makes some writers and illustrators cringe. Others might call their blogs indispensable to their careers. Here's what all the fuss is about.

### What's a blog?

A blog (shortened from “web log”) is a cross between a private journal and a web page available for anyone to read. Every entry is called a post or posting, and most blogs are updated frequently, if not daily. The person (or group) running the blog is the “blogger.” The best blogs focus on a particular area of interest, such as writing, book promotion, or working with agents (not to mention politics, food, etc.).

One critical difference between a journal and a blog is that most blogs allow readers to comment — offering a different opinion, their own experiences, or a joke about what they read. Since many blogs are read regularly by people who get to know each other a little, this can make a blog into an online community.

### Why should I care about other people's blogs?

Although plenty of blogs are filled only with personal ramblings — who cares? — other blogs are educational, entertaining, or both. Blogs can help writers and illustrators with:

- Research and access to formal and informal experts.
- Education about the publishing industry and submission processes.
- Market insight about the tastes of particular editors, art directors, and agents.
- Networking and peer support.
- Promotion of your books and your brand.

If you're just getting started with blogging, check out the blogs listed below or in the longer sampling at the end of this article. Just type the url into your Internet browser as you would a regular website address.

Most blogs include links to others, so if you start exploring, you'll soon find favorites of your own. (If you have web aggregation software, which you can download for free, you can often use RSS syndication subscribe to an automatic feed that will deliver new posts to your e-mail inbox.)

- **Agent and editor blogs**

Miss Snark, an anonymous literary agent for adult books, uses her blog at <http://misssnark.blogspot.com> to answer questions from would-be writers with acerbic (“snarky”) wit. It's especially useful for writers about to plunge into an agent search. There are also editors who blog, both anonymously and under their real names.

- **A Fuse #8 Production**

**<http://fusenumber8.blogspot.com>**

Fusenumber8 is the pseudonym of a children's librarian at The Donnell Central Children's Room in Manhattan. Her entertaining blog about children's books is filled with insight, book reviews, opinions about publishing news, and links.

- **A book promotion blog**

**[http://mjroseblog.typepad.com/buzz\\_balls\\_hype](http://mjroseblog.typepad.com/buzz_balls_hype)**

A bestselling author's tips and ideas for generating book buzz.

- **A marketing collective blog**

**<http://community.livejournal.com/classof2k7>**

Group blogs by authors with a shared interest are becoming increasingly common. I belong to this one because we all have first middle-grade or YA novels being published in 2007, and we're working together on promotion.

### **Should I have a blog of my own?**

Maybe, especially if you're already published or have a new book coming out. A blog does not replace a traditional website, but many authors and illustrators find that blogging can help build buzz and name recognition, drive traffic to their websites, or help promote availability for school visits.

Use your imagination. Since some experts estimate that a new blog is created every second, it's a challenge to make yours stand out, and even harder to find a topic or focus that interests others and that you can keep talking about, week after week, for more than a couple of months.

### **Okay, how do I start?**

There are entire blogs about creating your own, including one at [www.problogger.net](http://www.problogger.net). Blogger **Darren Rowse** offers a compendium of how-to information for beginners, including 23 questions to ask yourself to make sure the blog you create will be useful for readers.

The two most well-known blog hosts, LiveJournal at [www.LiveJournal.com](http://www.LiveJournal.com) and Blogger (aka Blogspot) at [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com), offer plenty of help and instruction, as well as free accounts. Start a blog at no cost today, if you like.

### **Warning!**

Beware, however, because blogs can be addictive, whether you're reading or writing. They take time and perhaps creativity away from your book projects, so enjoy them in moderation. And don't ever forget that a blog is a *public* journal — there may be an editor or agent reading those words, so don't post anything that would be embarrassing if the wrong people read it.

## **Good kick-off blogs for children's writers and illustrators**

Compiled by Joni Sensel, author of *Reality Leak*, coming April 2007 from Henry Holt

### **Research resources — blog directories**

(Find blogs on nearly any topic, and interact directly with those experts.)

<http://www.technorati.com>   <http://www.bloghub.com>   <http://dir.blogflux.com>

### **Blogging Agents**

Miss Snark (not specific to children's, but good basic info):

<http://misssnark.blogspot.com>

Agent Kristen Nelson (reps some YA):

<http://pubrants.blogspot.com>

MG/YA/Adult Agent Rachel Vater (Lowenstein/Yost):

<http://raleva31.livejournal.com>

Jenny Rappaport, L. Perkins Agency: <http://litsoup.blogspot.com>

Nadia Cornier at Firebrand: <http://agentobscura.livejournal.com>

Nephele Tempest, YA agent at The Knight Agency:

<http://nephele.livejournal.com>

Anonymous agent's assistant: <http://rejecter.blogspot.com>

### **Blogging Editors/Art Directors**

Cheryl Klein, editor for Arthur A. Levine:

<http://chavelaque.blogspot.com>

Irene Gallo, Art Director for Tor/Forge Books/Starscape:

<http://igallo.blogspot.com>

Harold Underdown: <http://www.underdown.org/blog.htm>

Evil Editor (query critiques, fun making up stories from premises):

<http://evileditor.blogspot.com>

### **Promotional Tips**

A bestselling author's tips and ideas for generating book buzz:

[http://mjroseblog.typepad.com/buzz\\_balls\\_hype](http://mjroseblog.typepad.com/buzz_balls_hype)

Tina Headley's BookSmart blog, "marketing intervention for books:"

<http://justinaheadley.livejournal.com>

### **Booksellers/Librarians/Industry Folks**

Alice Pope, the editor of Children's Writer's & Illustrator's Market):

<http://cwim.blogspot.com>

A Fuse #8 Production, from Betsy Bird, children's librarian at The Donnell Central Children's Room in Manhattan): <http://fusenumber8.blogspot.com>

University Bookstore: <http://universitybookstore.blogspot.com>

Info on kids' books from librarian in Menasha, WI. (This site also has a HUGE list of other blog links): <http://kidslit.menashalibrary.org>

Lots of book reviews: <http://flamingnet.com/index.cfm>

Two links to MANY children's book blogs:

<http://www.fairrosa.info/bloglist.html>

<http://del.icio.us/kidslit>

### **Collectives of writers, illustrators, editors, etc.**

Everyday Matters Superblog (composite blog from many artists):

<http://www.edmsuperblog.co.uk>

Childrens' Illustrators' Blog Ring (a gateway to more than a dozen member illustrators' blogs): [www.pbjunkies.com/cibring/blogring.html](http://www.pbjunkies.com/cibring/blogring.html)

Blue Rose Girls (several illustrators/authors and editor Alvina Ling from Little, Brown): <http://blurosegirls.blogspot.com>

Class of 2k7 debut MG and YA authors:

<http://community.livejournal.com/classof2k7>

### **Top Ten Blogs About Writing and Publishing**

(by Jack Oceano, focused on adult books but includes some interesting agents)

[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/52495/top\\_ten\\_blogs\\_about\\_writing\\_and\\_publishing.html](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/52495/top_ten_blogs_about_writing_and_publishing.html)

### **Creating your own**

[www.probblogger.net](http://www.probblogger.net) for advice & guidelines

[www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) or [www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com)