

# UThink: Blogs at the University of Minnesota

<http://blog.lib.umn.edu>

## Why are the University Libraries hosting blogs?

Libraries believe passionately in intellectual and academic freedom, and our role as advocates for those freedoms. Blogs are an excellent tool whereby students, faculty and staff at the University can let their opinions be heard. Blogs offer a way to rapidly discuss opinions, issues, and ideas, and allow people from across the country, and campus, to connect with each other through these ideas.

The Libraries are also excited about the opportunities blogs will provide the students, faculty, and staff of the University to build communities of interest. Blogs are an excellent collaborative work environment tool through which people can write about their research interests, and encourage others in their field to comment on these writings or even create their own blog to share their own thoughts.

In addition, blogs are great tool to promote discussion within classes on campus. Through this service, professors and TAs will easily be able to create blogs for specific classes and give the students in those classes access to post articles and opinions. Some classes on campus have already started to use blogs in this fashion. We hope this service will encourage other classes to take the leap!

Finally, one of the functions of the Libraries is to retain the history and cultural memory of the institution. Currently, we perform this function through our collections, such as the University Archives. Blogs are another way we can perform this function, and provide researchers of the future with access to the rich content blogs are sure to provide concerning the University.

In summary, the Libraries have numerous goals with this project: to promote intellectual freedom, to help build communities of interest on campus, to investigate the connections between

blogging and the traditional academic enterprise, and to retain the cultural memory of the institution.

## Who can use the service?

The University Libraries offer this service to the faculty, staff, and students of the Twin Cities campus of the University. Anyone with an active U of M Internet Account may login with his or her Internet ID and Password (your email ID and password) and start blogging!

## How much does it cost?

Of course, there is a cost for the University Libraries to provide and maintain this service. However, the service is free to the faculty, staff, and students of the University's Twin Cities campus.

## Why should I use the blog service at the University Libraries? Why not Blogger or LiveJournal?

Good question. You are free to use whatever blogging system you want, however you may want to check out what our system offers:

- No advertisements.
- Integration with the U of M Central Authentication Hub (x.500) for access to the system using Internet IDs and Passwords. This means no messy username/password maintenance for us, and easy access to the system for students/faculty/staff.
- Allows students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to create multiple blogs, really as many blogs as anyone wants.
- Allows blog owners to easily attach other authors to their blogs to create team blogs, class blogs, club blogs, etc. Blog authors can attach anyone that has an Internet ID and Password to his or her blog.
- Allows blog authors to upload graphics and other multimedia (doc, ppt, pdf, etc.) to their blogs.
- Creates the necessary blog directories (the main directory and the archives directory) on the fly without any administrator intervention.
- Uses one of the most popular blog software packages in the world: Movable Type.

We also hope to tie the library blog system to the [MyU portal](#) to give users easier access to their own blogs and the blogs of others. Thanks to Movable Type's automatic RSS syndication page generation our users could use the MyU portal as a blog aggregator.

### **Does the library offer any support to users of the blog system?**

Currently there is very limited support for users of the system. In this pilot phase the libraries are trying to gauge how much support will be necessary. If you have any questions or comments about the service please email [uthink@umn.edu](mailto:uthink@umn.edu). The libraries also hope to offer training sessions in the future. Please also try to find answers to your questions using the [Movable Type Support Forum](#).

The Libraries are also more than happy to give a presentation to any group that wants to learn more about UThink and how to use the service. Please email [uthink@umn.edu](mailto:uthink@umn.edu) for more information.

### **How much control do I have over my blog(s)? Can I edit entries I make?**

You have complete control over your blog(s). You may add, edit, or delete any entries you make into your blog. You may also delete your entire blog if you feel that is necessary. You may also change the appearance of your blog including adding or editing any of the HTML, CSS, or graphics.

### **How long can I have access to my blog?**

The University Libraries intends to provide access to a blog as long as the blog owner has an active U of M Internet Account. This means that a user could have access even after he or she graduates.

### **I'd like to add a blog for my department, but UThink doesn't authenticate our departmental email address/Internet ID. Can this be fixed?**

To make departmental email addresses/Internet IDs work, simply add your department's email address/Internet ID as an author of a blog you have already created. Once an Internet ID is in UThink, it has complete access to the system. This

includes Internet IDs from the coordinate campuses. After you've added the Internet ID as an author, log in with that Internet ID. If you successfully authenticate, remove the departmental Internet ID as an author of the blog you initially attached it to.

### **How can I tell if anyone is reading my blog?**

The University Libraries hope to provide usage statistics for the blogs on the system as soon as data is available. We also hope to show what the "Top Blogs" are in terms of usage.

### **I would like to have a private blog, where access is blocked by a username and password. Is this possible?**

Unfortunately this is not possible at this time. We are looking into some options, but essentially don't post anything that you don't want to be potentially read by the public at large. Keep in mind, though, that just because you write something does not mean people will read it.

### **Are there any rules I should be aware of?**

U Think: Blogs at the University Libraries is governed by the same rules, guidelines, and policies that govern the student, faculty, and staff web space provided by OIT. For more information please see [Service Guidelines and Description](#).

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Content from the **UThink** FAQ.

More Q&A available at:

<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/about.html>

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