

## **Speaking of Something Interesting: A Snapshot of Expert Voices Pre-Beta Content and Use**

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Expert Voices, NSDL's blogosphere, is currently in pre-beta release. In preparation for a public beta launch Core Integration has been developing Expert Voices content models, production practices, technology, and documentation since April 2006 in collaboration with Pathways and other partners. The original EV content model is based on a discovery team approach to problem solving that includes recruited teachers, experts, librarians and others who share insights and research around STEM topics in a blog. Additional news and event content models related to Core Integration and NSDL community initiatives have also emerged.

Thousands of pornographic comments began arriving in Expert Voices' blogs less than a week after the site went live on the Internet. Alpha release blog administrators were challenged to keep up with the deluge while scanning for real content. User interface, technology and help documentation improvements have been completed and in some cases are still underway. This brief report is an overview of what's been happening in NSDL's blogosphere followed by suggestions for how current Expert Voices content might be leveraged as part of the upcoming public beta release to increase usage and collaboration among NSDL Pathways, partners, and the general public in NSDL's blogosphere and beyond.

Expert Voices blogs<sup>5</sup> contain content that is timely, informative, and contributed by a diverse group of writers and experts in support of NSDL outreach and communications initiatives. The Expert Voices Index is a snapshot of facts about Expert Voices blogs ([blue](#)) and comparisons to blogging on the Internet in general ([green](#)).

### **The Expert Voices Index**

#### *Overview*

Number of Expert Voices Blogs that have been established since April 2006:  
17

Number of registered Expert Voices administrators and contributors from Core Integration Pathways, NSDL projects and other institutions: 95

Number of Expert Voices administrators and contributors who are Core Integration staff members: 16

Number of Americans adults who say they keep blogs: 12 million<sup>1</sup>

### *Recruiting*

Approximate number of emails it takes to get agreement to establish a discovery team for an Expert Voices blog<sup>4</sup>: 7

Approximate number of phone calls it take to answer questions and refer team members to help documentation for an Expert Voices discovery team blog<sup>4</sup>: 2-5

Approximate number of phone calls/emails it takes to get a blog description and first post<sup>4</sup>: 2-5

Percentage of all bloggers nationwide who are anxious to share what they know with others: 64%<sup>1</sup>

### *Posts and Comments*

Total number of posts in Expert Voices blogs: 92

Total number of comments to Expert Voices blogs: 47

Most often selected GEM subject category in Expert Voices blog posts ("Science"): 41

Least often selected GEM subject category in Expert Voices blog posts ("Health"): 7

*Eschool News* Pick for Best Classroom Instruction Blog for Students: "Applied Science Research"<sup>3</sup>

Percentage of all Internet bloggers who say "my life and personal experiences" are the topic of their blogs: 37%<sup>1</sup>

Percentage of all Internet bloggers who say "general news, current events, and/or technology" are the topics of their blogs: 14%<sup>1</sup>

Highest number of posts and comments on any Expert Voices blog: Web Kids (10/12)

Second highest number of posts and comments on any Expert Voices blog: News Topic Center (12/6)

Third highest number of posts and comments on any Expert Voices blog: Boneyard Science/K12 Forensics (6/10)

Total number of pornographic blog comments the Alkismet plug-in has

stopped since it was installed: 8,490  
(comments that have not been submitted to EV administrators for action)

Percentage of all bloggers who believe their audience is mostly people they know: 49%<sup>1</sup>

### *Use*

Number of EV blogs established with the help of the Eskeletons Project, the Math Gateway and the Middle School Portal: 3

Number of EV blogs established as companions to the NSDL/NSTA Web Seminar Series: 3

Number of EV blogs established as part of Annual Meeting promotion and publicity: 3

Number of EV blogs established as part of NSDL communications efforts: 2

Number of EV blogs established as part of Core Integration Community-building and outreach efforts: 2

Average number of posts per EV bog: 5

Average total number of comments per EV bog: 2.8

Average number of EV posts per week: 1-3

Number of images posted on Expert Voices blogs: 15

Percentage of bloggers nationwide who display photos on their blogs: 72%<sup>1</sup>

Percentage of bloggers nationwide who post new material to their blog every few weeks: 28%<sup>1</sup>

Usability testing on the limited release alpha and pre-beta release versions of Expert Voices has primarily consisted of first-person interviews and correspondence with Pathways collaborators. More formal usability testing is underway for the public beta release.

### **Public Release**

- Promote content models (discovery, news, discussion) as part of the public release as examples that demonstrate how to use Expert Voices for education for potential bloggers.
- Promote the use of Expert Voices blogs to contribute resources to the Library
- Promote the use of Expert Voices blogs to provide context around

## resources

- Promote RSS feeds of top blogs to appropriate audiences as part of campaigns
  - Promote models and RSS feeds to encourage participation and use by Pathways as part of campaigns
  - Consider packaging, promoting, distributing EV content in additional ways.
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1. Pew Internet and American Life Project Reports: Bloggers: *A Portrait of America's New Storytellers*. July, 2006. <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP%20Bloggers%20Report%20July%2019%202006.pdf>
2. NSDL Expert Voices <<http://expertvoices.nsdl.org>>
3. *Eschool News Online*, Panelists; Blogs are Changing Education: Winners of the first-ever "Best of the Education Blog" Awards. May 2006. <<http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/showstory.cfm?ArticleID=6208>> Best Applied Science Research Blog: <<http://www.appliedscienceresearch.blogspot.com/>> "Designed to promote students understanding of concepts by exploring and sharing ideas with other students."
4. Please contact with additional data on discovery team start-up process. There is not a lot of information about similar EV discovery team models in support of either formal or informal educational practices that I have found. Common education uses are teachers' sharing professional development information, teacher use as a communication tool with students and parents, and students/teachers blogging for personal reasons that are similar to national trends.
5. EV blogs that have not had new posts for 2-3 months do not appear on the Gateway Page, but are preserved. A blog archive is in development that will enable users to browse all blogs with content.