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The New York Times

Now, at a Site Near You, the Blogging Librarian

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Abstract (Document Summary)

Sharon Brettschneider, director of the State Division of Library Development, noted that libraries in Stamford, Westport, New Canaan and Brookfield have blogs, and many libraries have embraced social networks like MySpace and Flickr, too.

In Connecticut, the staff of the Darien Library is leading the charge in embracing the online collaboration and feedback that blogs provide. Visitors to darienlibrary.org now find links to 10 blogs that cover subjects like movies and music, books, information and technology and community matters.

Full Text (406 words)

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Teenagers are doing it. So are those who follow politics. And in increasing numbers, librarians are, too.

Blogging, that is.

In Connecticut, the staff of the Darien Library is leading the charge in embracing the online collaboration and feedback that blogs provide. Visitors to darienlibrary.org now find links to 10 blogs that cover subjects like movies and music, books, information and technology and community matters.

Louise Berry, the director of the library, said Alan Gray, the library's technology director, got the staff interested in blogging in September 2005. Initially, it was a way to replace the monthly e-mail newsletter, but it has since expanded and taken on a life of its own. Currently, 12 of the library's 36 staff members contribute.

"We still use traditional means of communication like press releases, fliers and the local newspaper," Ms. Berry said, "but this is another form of communication, and a preferred one for parts of our community."

Barbara Thomas, a technical services assistant, critiques new DVD releases as well as current movies at least once a week.

"A lot of what I do is behind the scenes," she said, "so this gives me an opportunity to reach out with another friendly, approachable voice."

Staff members are given ample leeway. Janet Davis, a reference librarian who oversees the music collection, and Ms. Thomas interviewed the Beatles biographer Bob Spitz when he spoke at the library, then posted the interview as a Podcast.

"When Rolling Stone did its 1,000th issue, I thought that was interesting, so I blogged about that," Ms. Davis said. "And last September, I thought Buddy Holly was underappreciated. It was his 70th birthday, so I blogged about that."

Few of the blogs have comments from readers, but that does not mean they are going unread. David Bayne, a member of the Darien Democratic Town Committee and the Representative Town Meeting, has commented on the Community Matters blog. He feels it could be a valuable place to suss out public opinion.

"A lot of people can't get to a public hearing at 8 p.m.," he said, "but everyone has access to a computer."

Sharon Brettschneider, director of the State Division of Library Development, noted that libraries in Stamford, Westport, New Canaan and Brookfield have blogs, and many libraries have embraced social networks like MySpace and Flickr, too.

"We need to be out there pushing all the wonderful things we're doing, or we'll get passed by," she said.

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