

BLOGGING: A NEW THREAT TO STUDENT RESEARCH?

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ABSTRACT

With the recent history of “one-time respected” organizations like Enron, Merrill Lynch, Global Crossings, and the behavior of other organizations, postsecondary education institutions are being questioned if subjects like ethics are being taught or researched in present day colleges. Today’s college instructors often feel at “professional risk” in dealing with the ever-changing face of our craft. For example, plagiarism is a rising plague in the education and research arena for both students and educators. Now, a new concept called “blogging” is growing and challenging the basic tenets of doing good student research. Should we be concerned? This session examines what blogging is and what are its implications for student research and our educational system.

Key words: Blogging, Research, Ethics

Introduction

This session discusses a new potential threat to education that can be affecting student research in education today. Have you ever looked at the reference sections of student research papers recently? If you have, one sees a proliferation of references to sites taken directly off of the web. It is wonderful to think the student may be searching and discovering deeper knowledge on the subject topic. However, have you ever thought about the concept of blogging?

Our expectation is for students doing research on any topic to use reliable sources of information. Students must cite the sources and make sure the information comes from a credible source. The student is also expected to ethically perform research by providing information that is truthful

and meaningful. Unfortunately, the Internet has already been marked as having problems with the reliability of information and if it is credible. Now the issue of blogging needs to be examined and discussed.

Bloggng

Bloggng is a phenomenon that could revolutionize and impact how research is being conducted today. As it began around 1994, it could be characterized as nothing more than some online diaries containing inspired writing. Tweney (2002) describes bloggng “as a vehicle for personal expression because it is an easy way to capture, comment on, and keep abreast of interesting bits of information.” Generally to blogg, one may see something interesting on the web and in seconds you can link it on your weblog, add comments, and then be on to something else. Weblogs, or blogs for short, are web pages constructed through using electronic publishing tools and are heavy on opinion and that link to other Web pages to support their ideas (Foley, 2002).

However, many different types of blogs exist today. Blogs can be categorized into two basic types: personal blogs and portal-type blogs. Personal blogs are written primarily by a single person and can range from articulate essays to “trivial thought bubbles.” (Foley, 2002) Portal-like blogs can serve to aggregate content by offering links to personal blogs, news stories, discussion threads, and other electronic content (Foley, 2002). Other portal blogs are seen as tech blogs, sex blogs, news blogs, drug blogs, sites packed with links, quips, ideas, and arguments that just months ago were the near monopoly of news outlets and traditional journalism. As Andrew Sullivan of Wired warns this year, the danger with blogs is that they are personal and driven by the writer of each piece of information (Sullivan, 2002).

QUESTIONS FOR EDUCATORS

Who does the review and editing of blog documents being offered to anyone with net access? What credibility do these articles offer? Are they appropriately researched? Does this information come from legitimate sources? What does this new “blog source of information” mean for educators and researchers? Does this “muddy the waters” for class assignments?

Questions about the nature of blogging will be addressed within this interactive session. Is it credible for use in research? Is it reliable and useful? Finally are blog sources ethical to use? Is blogging a publishing revolution that can have more impact than anything since the printing press? If this revolution becomes reality, how does education and research embrace it? It is being seen that there is a widening group of Web devotees who think they, through the power of their own observations and unfiltered analysis, can provide better a alternative to the traditional media (Foley, 2002). As Andrew Sullivan (2202) suggests the “blogger” could be to words what Napster was to music. Are faculty and students ready for future research?

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