

THE BARNARD CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN

FEMINIST FUTURES -- BLOGGING FEMINISM: (WEB)SITES OF
RESISTANCE

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2006

Janet Jakobsen: I want to introduce the two moderators of tonight's panel. They are Gwendolyn Beetham and Jessica Valenti. And they are also co-editors of a forthcoming issue of our on-line journal -- The Scholar & Feminist On Line -- which you can find at www.barnard.edu/sfonline. So please, we're videotaping tonight for part of that Journal issue, and we invite you to check out the Journal now. The current issue is on Women and Sport. And we invite you in the spring, to look for the full issue on blogging. I will introduce our two moderators and then they will introduce the rest of our panelists.

Gwendolyn Beetham currently is at work on a project at the United Nations, here in New York, and has been actively involved with the feminist movement for years.

You don't look old enough to have been involved for years, but nonetheless, that's what it says here.

She is co-founder of The Real Hot 100 -- a project that aims to change the perception of younger women in the media.

And that is at www.therealhot100.org. And she's a founding member of the Younger Women's Task Force, and a contributing editor to *The Women's Movement Today*, an encyclopedia of third wave feminism, which was published by Greenwood Press.

She has worked at the National Center for Research on Women in New York City, and at the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Gwendolyn holds a Masters Degree in Gender from the London School of Economics and Political Science; and a B.A. from Kenyon College.

With her, her co-moderator and the co-editor of that particular issue of *The Scholar & The Feminist On Line* is --

Jessica Valenti. She is a Founder and Executive Editor of the popular blog -- *Feministing.com*. She also blogs for NARAL, Pro-Choice America's website. *The bushvchoice.com*. And she has a Masters Degree in Women's and Gender Studies from Rutgers University, and has worked for organizations such as NARAL, Pro-Choice America, Legal Momentum -- formerly Now Legal Defense and Education Fund. Planned Parenthood, The Women's Environment and Development Organization, which is WEDO. And *Ms. Magazine*.

She is also a co-founder, with Gwen, of the Real Hot 100 -- a campaign to highlight the important work that young women are doing across the country. She's a contributing author to -- "We

Don't Need Another Wave," from Seal Press. Her writing has appeared in Ms. Magazine, Salon, The Guardian, Alternet, and The Scholar & Feminist On Line, and Guernica.

Jessica is currently writing a book about feminism for younger women, which will come out from Seal Press in the spring of 2000. So it is with great pleasure that I welcome Gwendolyn and Jessica to our panel.

Gwendolyn Beetham: If you don't mind, I'm going to go ahead and do my introduction from here. And I'd like to thank you, Janet, for having us. And to thank Barnard in general for being so supportive of this edition that we're doing on Blogging and Feminism. They've been really great.

And thanks to all of you for coming. So just to give you a little background. We proposed this idea to Barnard a little over a year ago, to do an edition on Blogging and Feminism. And at that time, as you all know, blogs were still sort of edging their way into the mainstream.

Today, however, it's a little different. Blogs are everywhere. All the major news outlets have them. Even USA Today has a blog, and they're on the rise internationally as well. In fact, where I'm doing my project, at the United Nations, the Sudanese government cited comments made on John (inaudible)'s personal blog as a reason to kick that U.N.

Special Envoy out of Sudan. It was an excuse, but nonetheless, it prompted BBC to coin the term "direct diplomacy."

But some people in the blogosphere, particularly more liberal bloggers, said that this meant that blogs had jumped the shark. Or rather, if even the U.N. is using blogs, I think we have a problem with blogs as a medium for radical change. So, in a world where new technology pops up every day, are blogs obsolete? -- is the question I'm posing today.

And if so -- well, what are we doing here? But I think that even, if you look at last week's election results, you can see that blogs are very much alive and well. And all of our panelists here today are going to attest to that fact.

One of the things that hasn't changed a lot over the past year is the way that women are talked about in the blogosphere. And the fact that white males still seem to get all the attention, still seem to dominate the political blogging scene. And the fact that the ways blogs can be used for feminist activism, still haven't been fully examined in or outside of academia.

And so, this is what we've come here to talk about today. I'm going to turn things over to my co-editor, co-founder . . .

Jessica Valenti: Heterosexual life partner.

Gwendolyn Beetham: . . . heterosexual life partner --

Jessica, in just a minute. But before I do, I'm going to ask

the panelists to go down the line and introduce, say a little about themselves just so you know a little bit about them before we start.

Alice Marwick: Hi, I'm Alice Marwick. I am a Ph.D. candidate at N.Y.U. And I study Social Media and User Practice in commercial Internet spaces. I have a Masters in Communications from the University of Washington, a Bachelors in Women's Studies from Wellesley College. And I've been working in the technology industry since 1995, as a project manager, strategist and private planner.

Liza Sabater: I'm Liza Sabater and I publish Culture Kitchen and the Daily Gotham amongst other blogs. I am actually, I call myself an academic (inaudible) from a Ph.D., from the New York University, in Latin American Neo-Baroque Literature. I have a Bachelors Degree in Latin American Studies with a focus on politics and economics.

And I actually took to blogs as a way to get out of a writer's block that I attributed to over 15 years of academic work.

(laughter)

Lauren Spees: I'm Lauren Spees. And I'm one of the co-founders of Hollaback NYC. And I'm also the Founder of Artistic Evolution, a not-for-profit I run, which devises and enacts social issue campaigns using art, technology and bicycles. I am

a candidate for an M.F.A. at Brooklyn College right now; I'm doing the performance in interactive media arts program. I went to U.S.C. for undergrad, in theater.

Michelle Riblett: I also went to high school with Lauren.

Lauren Spees: We went to an all-girls boarding school together.

Michelle Riblett: I'm Michelle. I am the co-founder and editorial writer and press contact for Hollaback Boston. And I graduated in 2005 from Barnard with a major in Women's Studies and a concentration in Philosophy. And I love Barnard. I worked at Barnard, at the Center for Research on Women for four years, as well as the Rape Crisis and Anti-Violence Support Center here.

And I'm interested in feminist interpretations of religious rhetoric and disability studies and queer theory and digital media arts.

Jessica Valenti: Before we go over to the panelists, I just want to say a couple of words about why Gwen and I wanted to edit an issue specifically on feminist blogging and why we thought it was so important. As Gwen pointed out -- blogs are pretty much everywhere, particularly political blogs. And there's really a tremendous amount of activity going on with feminist blogs.

I think that any of the speakers can tell you, there's really a vibrant community of feminist blogs out there. But something that both Gwen and I noticed that -- while there's an ongoing conversation on line about the feminist implications of blogging, there hasn't really been much scholarship about it, at least in terms of a cohesive body of work.

So that's why we really thought this issue was very important. Not only do we want to create something that people can reference and look to, if they were interested in feminist blogging in academia. But we also wanted to bring together academics and bloggers to kind of start a conversation -- one that we hope will continue after the issue is published.

That's why we wanted the blog format and have comments so that people can start that conversation and use it as a forum to really get the discourse going. Because we really do have an amazing opportunity in front of us, as feminists, with blogs.

I think that they shouldn't just be informing our activism and our academic work -- they should be a big part of it as well. So after the panelists speak and we open the floor for questions, I would really just ask that people think about how we can find those spaces and intersections where blogging and academia and activism come together, so we can figure out the best way to move forward and use blogging to further feminist goals.

So with that, I'll turn it over to Alice.

Alice Marwick: Great. As I said, my name is Alice and I'm in grad school at N.Y.U. Tonight I want to do a broad survey of two things. The first is -- academics and blogs, because that's one of the things that I studied. And the second thing is -- feminism and technology, because that is what I actually blog about.

And I don't really consider myself a blogger, so much as I consider myself an academic who blogs. But I'm one of many academics who looks at blogs and studies blogs. And I want to talk about why academics think blogs are interesting, to kind of start out with.

So first -- blogs are really easy for academics to analyze because they are public. You can read them, you can look at who links to who -- unlike things like e-mail conversations or instant messages, which are ephemeral; it's difficult to access.

Secondly, blogs tend to demonstrate values that academics like. They encourage citizen participation in politics, and they provide this forum where average people can comment on and answer to the mass media. There's also this idea that blogs are egalitarian, that anyone with Internet access can blog.

You don't need a certain degree of technical knowledge to set up a blog. And academics tend to also see blogs as a sort

of site of creativity and resistance. And academics love things that show how people are resisting dominant ideologies.

And of course, lots of academics themselves blog. Most academics are primarily writers and we also love to hear ourselves talk.

(laughter)

So the context in which you'll see a lot of academic work on blogging is where you write this big paper criticizing some huge problem. And then you say -- but blogs are the solution to this. And you usually see this in two contexts.

The first is -- problems with journalism and mass media. And I'm in communications, so one of the things we study is the affects of economic pressures and media consolidation on news gathering practices, which have led to the cutting of investigative journalism budgets. Decrease in foreign news. Emphasis on the advertiser-friendly stories. Things like that.

And this sort of violates what media scholar Gail Tuchman talks about -- the multiplicity of voices principle. Which states that -- free speech is not enough; it's about having access to many different voices in the media. So, being able to kind of put those voices out there.

And so, blogs, it is said, are ways to solve this problem. They sort of counteract these trends.

Blogs are also positive, as a solution to problems of political participation. And there are few outlets for the average citizen's viewpoints to be heard, pre-blogs. You see the dominance of lobbying and special interest groups. And this increased media coverage of politics as a horse race, versus any sort of analysis of the issues.

So blogs sort of allow people to organize, collectively, grass roots campaigns -- like the net roots. To mobilize particular candidates to discuss issues in depth, and to voice their points of view, even if those points of view are minority viewpoints.

So what have academics actually said about blogs that we can think of as interesting? And the first body of literature on blogs tends to be blogs as journalism. And there have been studies of things like war blogging and the Howard Dean blog. And these studies tend to claim that blogs are changing journalistic practices.

That they're empowering the citizen journalists, that they're increasing democracy, et cetera, et cetera. Academics also write about blogs in academia. Academics are very self-reflexive, but there is a lot of concern within academia, about the academy being an ivory tower, and that the scholarship that we do never gets out to any sort of public concerns.

Like say, there's women's studies scholarship and then there's feminist action on the front lines. There's a disconnect between the two. So, blogs are sort of a way for academics to start discourses with regular people, people who are political activists. People outside the academy, especially because there's generally a two-year delay on academic papers before they get into journals, where no one besides academics reads them anyway.

The third body of research is on blogs as gender. And that's kind of what I want to focus on. And there's a group of researchers at Indiana University, Bloomington, who wanted to interrogate this claim that blogs are democratic. And they found that, while there are a ton of women and teenagers who blog, and they've been very important to the development of blogging from the get-go, the public discourse about blogs is always gender male; it's always white. It's almost always heterosexual.

And so, they found that this correspondence, this overall androcentric viewpoint where activities are sort of traditionally gendered male, are privileged over activities that are traditionally gendered female. So you have this discourse in which blogs are seen as intellectual, political, public, important and authoritative.

And this sort of neatly maps onto cultural notions of public masculinity. And so, women's blogs are seen as private, emotional, personal, trivia and sort of gossipy. There's another study by Tremaine and Harp[?] that found that 90 percent of the top political blogs were written by men.

And they were like -- well, why is this? Is it because women don't blog about politics? Or is it because all the blogs that women write are crappy? And they found that neither of those things is true, which is good. And they also found the people tend to define what was good as -- what male political blogs were. Which is sort of this nice little circular argument.

And they found that male bloggers tended to link all to each other, but they didn't link to female bloggers. That's a big surprise.

So now I want to turn to my second subject, which is sort of a feminist's analysis of technology, because that's what I write a blog about. When people say . . . I meet a lot of male technologists. What is the feminist analysis of technology? So I just want to go over a couple of things.

First, I think a feminist view of technology has to examine the underlying power differentials of technology. Overall, only 12 percent of the world's population is on line. Only 16 out of 100 people have access to a land line.

So what happens when we posit these solutions to problems of democracy and media, that aren't available to a majority of people in the world? Or people who might have more pressing issues than whether or not they can blog. Like say -- sanitation or clean water.

Also, within the United States there is a lot of class-based access to digital media. The digital divide along race and gender is pretty much closed, but you see a lot of issues of rural access. People who access the internet in public libraries, there is filtering software that blocks a lot of access. There are a lot of issues there.

But there's also inequality within social technology itself. When people first started studying the Internet, there was this idea of -- the Internet is a place where minds would commune on this pure level. It's called the Disembodiment Hypothesis. Lisa Nakamura studied Asian-American representation in discussion groups, and she found that this sort of viewpoint resulted in the white male heterosexual subject being seen as the norm.

So basically, if you brought up the fact that you were Asian-American or you were queer or that you were a woman, you were seen as playing the race card. Or bringing gender into it, or something like that. So, to disembody really meant to erase lived experience.

However, we're now quite aware of the fact that sexism, racism, homophobia and classism don't disappear when you go on line. And participatory culture actually often reproduces narratives that we see in the dominant culture.

So if you just think of video games, as one example. You see a lot of sexist narratives, not only within video game play spaces, where "fag" is probably the most popular word thrown around. But also, in video games themselves, where female characters are often, have enormous breasts.

And I found this quote and I had to read it. It's from a Fanboy review of "Soul Calibur" -- "this series actually integrates breast physics to their advantage. Almost all of the female cast is given bounce and is done very well. In fact, Namco took advantage of this technology in their Game issue to apply almost the same type of breast physics to the buttocks of some characters."

So if these are the kinds of things that are going on within the technology industry, it's no wonder that we have this social inequality reproduced. And I think this is really partially due to the power imbalance within the technology industry. You have an industry in which only 30 percent of the people working in it are women.

And it's my experience, after ten years, that most of those women tend to be in project management, human resources and

marketing. They're really not in decision-making, responsible positions where they are making decisions about the features of technical products.

And we don't know what a world in which women had equal say in technology would look like -- because we've never seen it. And in fact, the enrollment in computer science programs for women, both on the undergrad and graduate levels is actually dropping.

So one of my big things is to try to make technology seem like something that women and girls, especially young girls, can have access to. And I think blogging is a great way to sort of do that.

So I think that we really need structural change. We can't depend on blogging or any type of technology to solve larger social problems. We need more women in technology and science, but we also need to change the overall rhetoric around blogging.

Although the media loves white male political bloggers, because they fit neatly into journalistic culture, we need to expand the definition of "political" to view blogs about feminism, race, class, gender, queer issues and so forth -- as public and important to everyone, not as niche interests.

Because furthering this rhetoric allows this ghettoization where these mainstream political bloggers can focus on basically each other, and on mainstream politicians. And they can leave

all these other messy issues to the women and the queers, because they'll just deal with it.

So we need to be really careful of the rhetoric that posits blogs as a solution to all these problems, where there are still these kinds of inequalities. But nonetheless, obviously I think feminist blogging is very important. I am a feminist blogger. I think that it provides for networks of activists, writers and regular folks.

As a woman who blogs about technology, it's allowed me to meet a lot of people in the technology industry that I wouldn't have had access to otherwise. And it's also allowed me to interface with other women in the technology industry, whose paths I wouldn't necessarily have crossed -- which has been great.

I think that feminist blogging also allows for a validation of our politics at a time when feminist voices are regularly left out of mass media. I think, in a lot of ways . . . what zines were for me when I was a teenager, I think blogs are for a lot of young women today. And I think that's fantastic.

And I think it's important to contribute a diverse array of feminist voices to the overall discourse. I think it's also important to create communities of women that are not corporate-sponsored like iVillage, or based on consumerism. Like communities around brides, around mommy, buying strollers.

Speaker: Barbie.

Alice Marwick: . . . Barbie. Around fashion, around chick lit. All these sort of consumer narratives of what it means to be a woman today. We really need a more diverse array of female communities than just those. And I think it's really important on line, to foster these feminist communities because so many other parts of the Internet can have hostile, sexist communities; homophobic communities where people don't feel comfortable.

I'm not saying that the feminist blogosphere is perfect, but I think it's a good place to foster these social changes. Thanks.

(applause)

Liza Sabater: It's interesting because it's a great segue . . . I actually have a different opinion about niche publishing. And so, it's a great conversation. Blog war!
[Laughs] No . . . I've actually been also in the business of being on line for over ten years.

When I decided to leave academia . . . part of the reason was because my then-boyfriend was experimenting with these things that ended up being called net art. And he was basically part of a whole movement of painters and sculptors and performance artists who happened to have day jobs as software developers or web developers.

And so, in their free time they experimented with web browsers and the Internet in ways that really looked like art, because they were artists. And so . . . hi, Margo! She's part of the wave. She knows my husband and she's part of the net art movement here in New York City. Hi.

And so, seeing what was happening on line with these first wavers, with net artists, at the time you had to be very skilled in coding. So for me, it was a thing about just waiting and seeing what would come for somebody who was a writer like me, to be able to get on line.

And so, years later blogs came and there's this thing now called the Blog Revolution. Now, Jessica knows that I go from panel to panel talking about blogging because actually, that's my job. I do try to make a living blogging. And one of my pet peeves is that everybody talks about the blog revolution, but nobody seems to be able to describe what the hell it is.

What is it that blogs have that actually make them revolutionary? And I've been thinking about this for years now, and I always go back to this one essay that I read in one of my feminist literature courses, back at N.Y.U., my alma mater also. And it's called "Las Tretas del Debil". It's from a collection of essays called "La Sarten por el Mango" and it was written by Josefina Ludmer. In English it's called "The Tricks of the Weak."

And it's an essay about Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz who happens to be the reason why I call my blog Culture Kitchen, by the way. And about her defense against the Inquisition where basically she was told to either stop writing about not just poetry, but philosophy and science -- because that was not her position as a nun -- or end up burnt in a stake.

And so, the whole essay is fantastic because it talks about rebellion and revolution in terms of spaces. It's not a metaphor, it's not a gesture. But about creating spaces where science and technology and knowledge are not supposed to happen.

Sor Juanas's defense is about talking about how the nunnery, the kitchen, even within the imposition of silence, of actually having to take a vow of silence -- there still was opportunity for her to think about philosophy, to think about physics, to think about science and to really find powerful spaces, spaces of power, let's put it that way.

Let me just read this. It says -- the article takes one step further the idea of feminism as the politics of a personal turned public. The main idea of *Las Tretas del Debil*, is that power is not about a fixed dialectical opposition. Strong versus weak. Power is a process of making spaces for expression. When Ludmer writes how this explains women writers' preferences for smaller literary genres like letters, autobiographies and diaries, at least within the context of

Latin American literature, you can see how blogs would fit nicely into this category of minor literatures where personal realities are used as power machines.

Ludmer's article owes a huge debt to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's, Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature. And I believe that it's through this particular book, through Deleuze and Guattari's book, that we really can understand the power dynamics that gets averted with blogs.

And how the technology of blogs makes possible what D and G say about becoming minor. Which in business-speak on the web, is called -- niche blogging. Niche publishing. And one of the things that they say is that minor literature is political, collective, revolutionary and even spacial.

Because it takes away territory. It takes away ethnicity and race, state, countries. Right? A minor literature, even though it takes that away, it goes further and there's no subject. It's not Liza, the person, who is writing at Culture Kitchen. Liza is an archetype for other people to relate to this person on line.

Which then takes, with this idea of not . . . me on line, not being just a subject, but an archetype. Then there is this idea that it's free to move around. There is this freedom of moving around, of being able to be outside of my blog, outside of my body, outside of my geography, outside of my race, my

ethnicity -- and be able to travel through the Internet, as ideas, as relationships and conversations.

So this idea of minor literature then escapes signification and representation. And to me, this is really important because one of the aspects, even though people think of niche writing as this very specific, very small, reflexive way of writing -- I actually see it as something much more powerful.

Which is, of giving a voice to stories that have been suppressed. And so, blogging makes that possible. And the structure of blogs is such that it makes that possible. And it's not just the writing itself, whatever words I put on my blog that make that possible.

But the reason why this whole idea of power relationships gets altered is because of the technology itself. Really quickly, I'm just going to refer to four things that are related to minor literature and to blogs themselves.

Deleuze and Guattari talks about vernacular language, vehicular language, referential language and mythic language. And it's interesting, because I read this book many years ago -- ten or fifteen years ago. I'm really old. And they're really young, and I'm not. [Laughing]

And when I was reading it again, it just hit me how . . . they wrote this book in 1975 and it's 2006, and how amazing. For example, the whole idea of vernacular language.

It used to be in Web 1.0, you had a web page. And it was very difficult to make direct reference to things posted on a web page.

With Web 2.0 -- and I'm throwing jargon there, so you can get the reason why I'm doing this -- something called the permalink came about. The idea of the permalink is that when you post . . . can we get a blog up here? When you post a blog, somewhere on the blog post, there's a link to that particular post.

So now, a web page is not just this static thing, but it's this map of territories. Show, on a post, a permalink. This is not just a page. You can't even think about this. A web page nowadays is a whole map of relationships. Every time there's a link on a page, it's not just relating to itself, but it's relating outside of itself.

And that's really powerful, because media is not supposed to be . . . big media is about concentrating, about controlling the spread of information. And it's about making it scarce and about making it impossible for The People to take and participate in it. That's what big media is about. That's what TV broadcasting networks are about. That's what radio is about.

With blogging now, you can say -- okay, I'm going to refer to this one particular part of the page. I'm going to put it on an email and send it somewhere. So now, we don't just have this

thing which is called a web page, or a space on line. But now we also have vehicular media like e-mail, for example. Like RSS, which is syndication.

And it's a way of reading a blog outside of itself. And it's a way of blasting it through the Internet through different media as well. Through cell phones, through Crackberrys . . .

(laughter)

. . . so it moves. You can move a blog anywhere. And then there is the aspect of referential language that D & G talk about which are basically categories. Whenever somebody posts and creates a category for that post, whether it's Fuck the Power or Feminism or Health -- now this blog is not about just feminism.

Every single category that you create on a blog, that helps the Google Bots find you, whenever somebody is googling for information, it opens up your writing and this particular space that you've created on line to a whole myriad of conversations that you didn't even know are out there waiting for you.

And so, that's also powerful because now, these are ways of opening up . . . it's almost thinking about the multiplicity of voices, it's a multiplicity of identities now. So it's not just a feminist blog. It's a blog, it's a space where feminism expresses health, expresses sex, expresses love, expresses technology, expresses politics, expresses a whole myriad of

different conversations with people that might not be interested in feminism at all.

A great example of this -- one of my most hit posts is one celebrity, one of my writers wrote "Forced pregnancy as celebrity porn." So people looking for celebrity porn, my post is about number four in Google.

And then the last one, really quick -- and this is why blogs are really, the technology of blogs make this media so powerful -- is the mythic language. MEMES, and if anybody knows what a MEME is here . . . MEME is basically a little bit of information like the dancing baby.

A phenomenon that all of the sudden, everybody is talking about it, everybody is making tee-shirts, it's on TV, it's everywhere. And you have no idea where it started. And so, this type of technology makes it happen and makes it possible. And so, my time is up and we'll talk about it later.

Lauren Spees: For us, it's important that you understand what Hollaback is. It's a campaign that empowers women against street harrassment by allowing them to take pictures of their street harrassment encounters with their cell phone cameras, and post it on line with their story. That's what it is.

The Boston Globe wrote an article about Hollaback Boston this past summer, and they refused to publish the URL address of Hollaback Boston. And when we addressed the editor, she said --

Dear Michelle, as a matter of policy, The Globe does not run the addresses of web sites that include sexually-explicit content.

Michelle Riblett: I wrote back. I said -- yes, unfortunately for women, sexual violence has a tendency to be really unacceptable.

(laughter)

And therefore, explicit. Women have to deal with being sexually harassed on the street in their faces every day, all over the world. And then we asked if they could please, please send us a copy of their policy. Suffice it to say that we never received that copy.

We love the exposure from The Globe and we appreciate interfacing with the press, but for them to refuse to cite us as an on-line link was very critical because if the on-line news, if something isn't cited as a link, it virtually doesn't exist. It defeated the entire purpose of exposing us to our main audience, which are on-line bloggers.

In contrast, a small broadcast from a radio station and an on-line link generated thousands of hits to the Hollaback sites within an hour.

Lauren Spees: Traditional media that has to adhere to policies and go through filters are at a disadvantage to bloggers who instantly can put out the story -- i.e., the

infamous multi-caught subway masturbator, Dan Hoyt, who was captured by the original Hollaback girl. Her name is Tara Newnan[?]. She just took a picture.

There was no Hollaback site. She was just like -- oh, that guy is masturbating, I'm going to take a picture of him because I'm scared. And the police ignored it, but as soon as she posted it on her blog, The Daily News picked it up. And that's the relationship that we're experiencing with media a lot.

Like, because blogs are on the tip about street harrassment and have the story and are telling the story about sexual violence that happens every day, the media is grabbing onto it and helping us, and has become a major ally.

It's kind of like a cyber-critical mass, like the critical mass bike ride. When there are 7,000 bicyclists, the bicyclists aren't creating the traffic; they are the traffic. So even though media consolidation is a reality, we're firing away at it and not being ignored.

So the Hollaback movement works by offering a quick and immediate response to this thing that's happening right now. In the past, before Hollaback, I had different reactions to street harrassment. One of them was to walk by with my head down, or ignore it, or . . . I would not holler back, but I would be like, say something.

Or I would go to a police officer. And none of that really worked. Whereas, this type of immediate social response has become a remedy and has really helped.

Michelle Riblett: The quickest way to broadcast anything into the world right now is to publish it yourself on line. And so, snapping a picture and blogging about incidents of sexual harrassment actually captures the moments that people are experiencing -- of anger or fear or frustration -- in a very intimate way.

As opposed to abstracting it further through second-hand reports in other forms of media. When I read the stories that people send in on the Hollaback sites, and see the pictures that the women themselves have taken, it's much easier for me to identify with them and to recognize the daily infringements upon my body, that I may experience.

Hollaback is allowing this kind of sexual violence to be interpreted by millions of people, as if they had experienced it personally.

Lauren Spees: To Hollaback to a street harasser . . . it's easy, it's accessible, it's free. And something that happened to me, I was at this, Speak Out Against Sexual Assault. It's a 24-hour thing at Union Square, by the Alliance Against Sexual Assault, in New York. And they introduced us as like -- the most exciting feminist activists around.

And I was like -- at the time, I didn't know that I was a feminist or an activist. So, it's interesting that Hollaback has afforded people an opportunity to participate in this movement against street harassment, even though they may not identify with the word feminist or consider themselves an activist.

Michelle Riblett: Since it's a public forum, anyone can make of the experience what they want it to be. So, women who may not have hardly anything in common besides the fact that they've been sexually harassed, can contribute on whatever level they want. They can send in a blurry picture, a clear picture, a text message or several paragraphs about what happened.

What's important is that they are reclaiming the experience as their own, on the blog.

Lauren Spees: We're going to read some posts. This one actually happened. Let's see if our plan worked, Michelle. Firefox is so awesome sometimes. Hollaback New York City. It's this one:

"Another marriage proposal with no ring. This dude is a professional menu distribution associate for the reputable Caribbean Flavors restaurant. His office is near the Bryant Park subway entrance. I passed him this morning, hands full of heavy luggage, refusing the handout and motioning to my unfree

hands, I simple state 'no thank you.' He irritatingly continues to try to poke menus into my forearm.

Then, pursued me down a few steps of the subway entrance, getting really close to my face and leaning in -- 'Marry me.' I put down my bag and grabbed my cell phone. He protests, 'no, why are you taking a picture? Oh, I see, you want my picture so you can go home and whack off to it' -- which is exactly what I'm doing right now with my free hand . . . notice, I'm not on the subway, but in the privacy of my home, enjoying my right to safely self-pleasure. I want to thank Caribbean Flavors for serving up spicy, delicious food and also, my new favorite whack-off material."

(laughter)

Michelle Riblett: "Tuesday, July 4, 2006 -- Holla Herzegovina. I was taking some videos in Mostar, Bosnia Herzegovina, when I noticed something seemed off." And then, she actually contributed a VLOG, which is a video blog of the experience.

Lauren Spees: I think she turned off the camera because she got scared, because that's why she left her camera running. Let's see if we can get this happening. [Works with computer] Let's see if this works. Whatever.

Michelle Riblett: "Holla, Herzegovina. I was taking some videos in Mostar, Bosnia Herzegovina, when I noticed something

seemed off. I would have left the camera running, but I was truly afraid. They followed us for two blocks before they finally turned back. These guys could have been doing a number of different things. My friend pointed out that it might be logical for them to come after an American taking pictures of the city, due to the unease in the former Yugoslavia with the U.S.'s involvement in the conflict, the current tourism in Bosnia, Herzegovina, et cetera. But I maintain that I would not have been physically intimidated were I not a woman."

I'm going to read another one: "Tuesday, June 27, 2006. The subject of this one is 'Fuck Your Own Ass.' A huge, tall guy approached my friend as she was standing on the train platform. He bent down and said in her ear, 'I just want to fuck you in the ass. What's so wrong with that?' So disgusting."

Lauren Spees: Go ahead, read the next one.

Michelle Riblett: "Sunday, April 9, 2006 -- Poolside Manner. 'I want to be your toilet paper.' Anonymous, London."

Speaker: Isn't that what Charles said to what's her name?

Speaker: What do you notice from the posts?

Michelle Riblett: When we read the posts, for us, our experiences, we notice -- you can't help but think, yeah, this is so wrong! Still, they contain their own breadth and nuance reports of what street harrassment really looks like. And

Hollaback doesn't define for others what counts as street harassment.

We leave that up to the women who experience it. So, their reports are really . . . the vocab matters, the tone matters, and the intention and translation matters. And all the posts come together in the blog as the slippery and icky and rootsy[?] stuff of gendered-powered relations, which is channeling for the readers that these situations are not about sex. They're about using sex and wielding sex for the sake of power.

Gwendolyn Beetham: Thanks. If you guys have any questions, we'll open the floor up for us or the panelists? None?

Liza Sabater: I have a comment. One of the things that you mentioned was that nowadays, if anybody wants to have their story put out there, that the fastest way is to put it on a blog, right? Well, the one complaint I have about that comment is that I think it also depends on how big your networks are.

How big your email list of people that you can say -- hey, I posted this horrible video on the Internet -- is. And one of things that I notice, actually, I did this exercise a year ago. It's like -- who are the people that I would trust with something that I write and post on line?

And I started looking through my e-mail addresses, and it really puts into perspective that even if you're on line, you still need other people.

Speaker: I think especially with feminist blogging, one of my co-bloggers, Vanessa is back there. I think something that we run into a lot, and I think a lot of feminist bloggers I'm sure you guys have this a lot too -- when you are writing anything political, and particularly feminist, you're leaving yourself open.

You're going to get some really nasty comments. And like you said, if you're not putting yourself out there just to the people you trust, you're putting yourself out there really, to anyone who wants to come in and anyone who wants to say -- really, anything. It's dangerous place to be, it's a scary place to be, I think, for a lot of feminist bloggers.

So there's been a lot of discussion on how to -- 1) support each other and have friends out there on line. Like I've had posts where all of the sudden . . . we call them trolls. They go in and they're just horrible and they're like "fuck you, you dyke bitch." Like, really horrible stuff.

You email your friends and you're like -- can you come over to my post quick, and help me? All of the sudden, there are 20 feminist bloggers who are like, "fuck you, go to hell!" It's a

really nice, when you take care of each other, it really is an on-line community that you depend on each other in that way.

Obviously, we have things like comment registration and stuff like that, to make sure that not everyone can get through. But I think that's an important part of, at least feminist blogging for me is that, you really are a part of this community and that you do have people that you don't even really know in real life, there to back you up if you need them.

Speaker: There's a question back there.

Audience Member: A question about that, and then a more general question. I was wondering how much editing you do, as manager of a blog? How do you operate this? And when you do editing, what kind of criteria do you use? So this is about the internal operations of blogs -- that's one question.

Another question is more general. I'm curious about why blogs, as a kind of technology vis-a-vis websites or bulletin boards, seem to be so appealing and fashionable nowadays? Because the same things I will be (inaudible) on a website or bulletin boards, which can be more interactive? So I'm curious about -- why blogs?

Gwendolyn Beetham: Does anyone want to hit on the question about editing?

Michelle Riblett: Sure. We state, on our site, that we reserve the right to edit for clarity. And we also have a

statement about race and class on our site. We say that -- replacing sexism with racism or classism is not a proper way to Hollaback. That's the terms we use. We're basically referring to the fact that there is historically, men of lower socio-economic backgrounds and men of color have been stereotyped as predisposed to sexual violence.

And so, we're trying to discourage that kind of stereotyping and so, if we get that type of language, we say that -- unless race or class is explicitly stated as constructive in your post, then we will edit it. But other than that, we publish every post we receive, regardless of what it says.

Liza Sabater: On my site, there are two tracks. There's the front pagers -- contributors and contributing editors on my site. And then there are articles, which on other community blogs which would be called Diaries, that anyone can publish. And they will appear on the sidebar.

If there is an article by somebody who is not a regular contributor or editor that I like, then I'll move it to the front page. There are several different ways of reading my blog.

Jessica Valenti: I think the point is, different blogs have different ways of editing. On Feministing, we have six writers that I trust, and they just go on and they write

whatever they want. There really is no editing, outside of maybe self-editing. Maybe you'll go back and read a post, and, well, I'll just fix that up.

You will usually state that you fix it up, so there's no . . . because people call you up for that. But I think it depends on the blog, really. There are so many different kinds. As to your second question, Alice?

Alice Marwick: Yeah, let me start off with that? I think that websites like personal home pages, like what you have from about '95 to '99 or 2000 -- really kind of required people to know some HTML. There weren't a lot of automated ways to do it. There was a technical barrier to entry, which is a technical body of knowledge that you pretty much had to teach yourself.

I taught myself HTML when I was working as a secretary and I had some free time on my hands. But I think also, why blogs are seen as so important, where other things like journals, diaries, websites haven't been -- I really do think that's because journals and diaries are seen as women's and blogs are seen as men's.

I really do think that that . . . women have been journaling on line since the late '90s, and a lot of their journals were about all kinds of political concerns, and all sorts of broad issues. But it's only once you get this

blogosphere that's gendered male, that people start paying so much attention to it.

But I also think that blogging tools have become so easy and accessible for most people, that it really opens up the opportunity to contribute to the discourse to people who wouldn't have been able to previously.

Gwendolyn Beetham: I just wanted to say, you mentioned bulletin boards, and why not do something like that which is interactive? Most blogs do have a comment section, so it is interactive, in that way? So that you do have that author/reader relationship where it's just not -- you're going to read me and I'm out of the picture.

You start a discourse and you have a conversation about whatever you're writing. And I think, in particular, I always like to tell this whenever I'm anywhere, I think what's exciting about blogs in terms of activism, is the immediacy that's going on.

Websites are updated, not that often, whereas blogs are updated several times a day. And a story I always tell, why I think that blogs are so important especially for feminist activism -- a couple of years ago, the Bureau of Labor Statistics decided it wasn't going to report on women's wages anymore. They have since changed their mind.

But when they reported it, they had a two-sentence release hidden on their website. Feministing reported on it, I think, that week, when it happened. And then three months later, I got an urgent action alert from NOW, about it. I was like -- if they had been reading blogs or if we had been working together somehow, maybe we really could have taken action on it sooner.

So I think that's some of the appeal of it -- it's the immediacy and that ability to take action quickly.

Audience Member: I think Alice said 12 percent of the world is on line?

Alice Marwick: Yeah, I got that statistic from a paper I just saw, Faye Ginsberg, who is a feminist cultural anthropologist. She works on areas of access of, like aboriginal communities in Australia. I haven't actually verified that.

Audience Member: Let's just say it's a very low number, it's not 12 percent exactly, but we can assume it's less than 15 percent. I was wondering if you could, if anyone would want to speak of the class analysis of blogging, and towards the idea that historically, one of our worries about feminism has been that it only speaks to higher income, white feminists.

I am wondering if blogs are sort of contributing to that legacy or if there is lower income people being involved in the blogosphere?

Speaker: Yes.

Speaker: Something that we were talking about, we're not trying to solve the problem of the digital divide. I mean, it's a really, really important issue but it's not our focus. But what I wanted to point out was -- anyone who owns a cell phone, and obviously, not everyone owns a cellphone. But anyone who owns a cell phone had a really remote IP address, which is an email address. And so, anyone who owns a cell phone could blog.

Liza Sabater: I'm always suspect of statistics that say -- 12 percent of the population in the world has Internet access. Because it's usually measured by a computer. And I don't know, but I can't own a Crackberry. I don't have that kind of money. There are a lot of people in the projects, just a couple of blocks from where I live, that have them.

Why? Because they don't have land lines. They don't have computers. So, paying \$300 for a Blackberry, it's still way lower than paying \$1,000 for a computer. And they have the same kind of web access. So we really have to redefine, and actually there's a core group of colored bloggers, which I call the Digital Ethnorati . . .

(laughter)

. . . yeah, we have higher incomes. But we also happen to be in these kinds of social, class-blended families. And in social, class-blended situations. And I can just tell you that

there's a lot more people of color with access to the Internet, through cell phones and through PDAs than . . . and this actually was an internal study done by ESPN.

I was at a conference where they said that the reason why they launched ESPN Mobile was because the fastest-growing segment of the population that was going mobile were Latinos, followed by Asians and then, African Americans. And between African Americans and white people, there was like 12 and 15 percent difference.

So when it comes to the digital divide, we really have to start redefining that because it's not, we really can't think of computers. And that's why blogs are so powerful because you can read a blog on this. You don't need to have a computer.

Speaker: I can post on my Blackberry.

Speaker: You do it all the time.

Liza Sabater: I don't have the patience.

Alice Marwick: Most statistics agree -- the majority of the U.S. population has access to the Internet. That's definitely true. But I think if you look at global access, the global south and global north. There's really big differentials between . . . high access is like, western Europe, Asia, North America, primarily.

There are certainly people with Internet access in every country of the world. But the access patterns are different.

There are a lot of people with mobile access and also, Internet cafes and patterns of usage are . . . maybe one person in a community will have a computer and they will charge other people to come use it.

There's been some studies of that. So there are different access patterns in different parts of the world.

Audience Member: Alice, you mentioned that very few top political blogs are written by women -- just men link to men primarily. In the last two years or so, there's actually been a growth of female blogs, like more mainstream ones like Michelle Malkin . . .

Speaker: (inaudible) blogger.

Audience Member: . . . (inaudible) feminist blogs. Two-and-a-half years ago, Feministing had just started (inaudible) and so on. So what do you think started this growth?

Liza Sabater: People like me bitching about it. I'll let them answer it. If you bitch enough, they will throw you a link. I mean, and this is not something that just happens in the political blogosphere. This really started in the technology blogosphere. And Shelly Powers is somebody that . . . Burning Bird is a blog that is a must-read by anybody interested in the history of the Internet, of the blogosphere.

And she talks about . . . somebody speaking to power from the margins. She really doesn't go to panels, but she really

nails it over the head, what happens with technology writers, technology bloggers is very much what has happened with political bloggers.

I think the turning point for political bloggers happened after I . . . I'm taking full credit of this one . . . what happened was, that a year ago the infamous Pie Wars happened in Daily Kos. It was about some show, some cable show.

Speaker: It was a reality "Gilligan's Island" show.

Liza Sabater: And it had women with pies all over their bodies. And I don't give a shit, I'm Puerto Rican, so I was like -- give me the money, I'll (inaudible), I don't care. But someone in Daily Kos got really offended. And so there's this whole thing about -- why do we have this ad on Daily Kos? And then, what happened was that Marcos -- because he's such a fantastic and articulate human being -- he goes and say, "you smelly hippies."

Speaker: He said -- sanctimonious women's studies sect.

Liza Sabater: Yeah -- granola-eating, sanctimonious, women's study sect has no place in this blog. And so, it just created a whole shit storm. And at the time, in this country, we were getting ready to deal with the issue . . . Katrina hadn't happened yet, by the way.

This was right before Katrina, but we knew, we were already hearing that justices were coming down and we might be dealing

with John Roberts and Alito. And so, I wrote this post about -- why is diversity even an issue in the blogosphere? And he actually front paged it, which is . . . of course, he doesn't talk to me anymore.

But the point being was that, after Katrina and especially during the whole campaign for the Supreme Court, they needed us. They needed feminist bloggers. And we wrote also a manifesto, almost, against John Roberts, that really put, really consolidated feminist bloggers as a block in talking about, being part of this blogosphere, political discourse.

Alice Marwick: That's not to say that we got the credit we deserved, but still . . . first of all, I think it depends on what you mean by a "top blogger" and what exactly that definition is. And I think what happens a lot is -- whoever The New York Times talks about when they talk about a blogging piece. They talk about the three same bloggers all the time.

It's like -- Matt Sower[?], Marcos, blah, blah, blah. It's the same thing over and over. And I think when you talk about the rise of feminist bloggers, I think we did it ourselves. We link to each other and we built a really strong community, and that's what happened.

Liza Sabater: And I think what happened, during the Supreme Court.

Alice Marwick: Yeah, a really great article that we actually reference in the issue was an "In These Times" piece by Lakshmi Chaudhry called "Can Blogs Revolutionize Progressive Politics?" And she really talks about the whole diversity issue, and talking to the top male bloggers, and asking them -- well, don't you think it's a problem that all of these bloggers are white men? And they're like -- no. I mean, and the conversation ended there. It's like -- no, no problem.

Liza Sabater: And what's problematic is that even progressive organizations are encouraging that. Working Assets actually has money allocated for what they call media training. And they've actually basically decided, they found somebody to get this grant and they decided there were only five bloggers who were going to be trained to go in front of media.

Of course, Marcos was one of them. Matt Stoller was one of them. Atrios was another. John Arivosis. So, we have basically the same people who appear as the face of the blogosphere, and then Mary Scott O'Conner and the women from firedoglake, what's her name? Jane Hampshire.

So -- no black people, no people of color, even though there's quite a few of us in the Top 100 in the United States, who have top blogs. And this was done by Working Assets. This is not a right-wing organization. So that's problematic. And that's the reason why I say that I feel that, for the future of

feminist blogs and the future of progressive politics in the United States, it is up to us to really start looking at ways of organizing and dealing from this small media position.

There is power in actually having a flock or an aggregate of bloggers sharing resources, sharing access and sharing power. And if we're going to wait for somebody to give it to us, it's just not going to happen. So the technology allows for that kind of coming together and really coalescing and creating different power structures.

Jessica Valenti: I think there's a lot of talk about making sure that we . . . the blogosphere is still a fairly new thing and we don't want to recreate the same sexist, homophobic, racist paradigms that you see in the general political system. Were you at PBS with us? There was a small group of feminist bloggers, and there was a panel, and there was like -- the power of the blog, and the future of . . . and it was supposed to be like, the most powerful bloggers on this panel. It was all white men.

So they have a screen behind it, and all of us are sitting there, like - what's that, sausage fest - all men. And as soon as the mike came around, the female bloggers sat there, sitting there waiting for the mike to come around. And we were like -- you're talking about power and blogs, and there's not one woman on your panel?

Liza Sabater: That was Gail Filipovich[?] from Feministe[?].

Jessica Valenti: And they're like -- what do you want us to do? Say no to come to the panel? They were really defensive. And we were like -- this is supposed to be a progressive conference, and you're not supposed to back away from these questions. And they were really freaked out. But it's stuff like that, we do it all the time, whether it's on line or in person. And that's where feminist bloggers really have power.

Liza Sabater: I'm on the board of Blog Her, which is this organization that is about bringing, raising the profile of women bloggers. And this summer we talked about the possibility of creating estro-swarms around technology conferences and political conferences. Where you just get a whole bunch of women and you just drop them there, on the day. Because there's no reason why these conferences just don't have women.

Lauren Spees: It's one thing to be with the terms like, in the net roots. And it's another thing to be grass roots. And you have to be both if you're an activist blog. You're on line making 14 connections in the blogosphere. It's like, more than a full-time job. It's like a ridiculous lifestyle, but it's really great.

And some of the most success that we found getting mentioned in the media or getting hits on the blogosphere have been from actually attending or creating different performative events. Like we did the Iditarod -- do you know what that is? It's the shopping cart race, it's like the Iditarod. It's like listed on Nonsense, it's on a list that goes around -- crazy events that go on in New York.

And we had a team Hollaback, and that was where we got our first news thing, from a Daily person who was there. Her name is Amy Zimmer. She's a brilliant writer; writes for the New York Metro and New York Daily. And she has great things every day. She hit on it months before other people.

And I emailed her and I was like -- actually, did you know that we not only blasted Van Halen, but we run this anti-street harrassment site? And she then wrote an article. And so, it was interesting, like if you just get out there and talk to people. Like I volunteer at Bluestockings, a bookstore; that's an excellent forum to meet tons of writers and people who are coming in, and speaking about their own things.

And then they have different connections and they can help you interface on different levels and understand your projects in a wider depth than we may have realized.

Gwendolyn Beetham: I think we're going to take a couple more questions.

Audience Member: Can you talk about what (inaudible) these blogs are, when you are talking about the feminist blogosphere? And how they are different from each other? And what relationship . . . you guys seem to know each other pretty well. What relationship these bloggers have with each other? And also, the difference between an individual blog, versus the group blogs that seem like most of you . . .

Speaker: Oh, my God, it's so overwhelming. When the issue comes out, we're going to have a big old blog roll. And I think if you go to Feministing or Culture Kitchen or any of our blogs, if you go to the blog roll, that's what we're talking about. You link to who you're connected with and who you really talk about.

Liza Sabater: I think there's three different categories of feminist blogs. There are some bloggers like Jessica and Lauren and Jill at Feministe that talk about feminism. So there's that category of feminist blogs. And there's the activist blogs like Hollaback.

And then there's like me, in the middle, which -- I don't write about feminism. But I write about everything from a feminist perspective. So for me, it's a practice, more than anything else. And I feel like that's basically . . . and even if it's a lawyer. There are law professors, there are photographers and artists and technologists who . . . almost

every technologist blogger that I know considers themselves a feminist.

There's mommy bloggers. There's a whole category of mommy bloggers who identify themselves as feminists, but they don't write about feminism every day. And then there's also transgender bloggers as well. And men, by the way. There are actually men who call themselves feminists.

One of the largest feminist blogs is "Alas, a Blog," and the publisher is a man -- is Barry Deutsch.

Speaker: is he anonymous?

Liza Sabater: No, he's not anonymous.

Jessica Valenti: That's not to say that some of us who blog full time, like Liza and myself -- like we do have a certain, we do go to a lot of the conferences and we are lucky enough to put ourselves out there in a real-life way. And I think there is that kind of feminist blog clique you'll see in every blogging conference. Because we have the opportunity to be there, but that's not to say that on-line, there isn't a much larger community going on.

Liza Sabater: There's a radical, feminist women of color, which is the Rafewofk[?], I think they call themselves. And it keeps on growing and growing and growing. It's fascinating to see. I mean, it really is. We do a lot of aggregating, Jessica and I, in checking new blogs coming out all the time.

Speaker: There was a question over here?

Audience Member: Yeah, I have a question for Lauren. You (inaudible) at that time; and is that to imply that now you do? And I was just wondering.

Lauren Spees: I found the community. I have long been wondering what I was. And I have a background in theater and stuff, and so I was wondering what was missing. And I had all these things that all fit into feminism and activism. But I didn't know, I didn't understand that that's what it was, until . . . and I thought that was kind of cool because it's not that scary. And it's really fun. It doesn't have to be something that's so, that necessarily is only for a privileged few.

Audience Member: I was wondering what you think about the cultural effect of blogs? Do you think that the kinds of discussions that go on, the fact that people are revealing so much about themselves in their discussions on line, that are so public? The kind of language that's emerging, the kind of way of empowering each other that's kind of different? I think it's some of that kind of content that has a cultural (inaudible) would you comment on that?

Alice Marwick: Yeah, I can at least speak to the idea that people are putting themselves out there. Because I think there's a lot of cultural anxiety right now around information

aggregation. People getting fired for their MySpace profiles. Or the worry that in 15 years you're going to really regret that home page that you put up when you were 13.

I'm so glad there was no Internet when I was 13.

(laughter)

But I really think that, when I always answer this particular question is -- I don't think that social practices have caught up with the technology yet. I think that the technology is sort of moving forward and we haven't really figured out how we are going to deal with the issues that it brings up.

I think that privacy is a big one, especially since people are willing to provide a ton of personal information. Not just in terms of a blog where they are like, sharing their thoughts and feelings. But like in terms of websites that are like -- what's your income, what's your gender, what websites do you go to? We're going to market to you in all these specific ways.

We're going to sell your data. The data brokers. This is a whole other area of research that I do; if anyone wants to come and talk to me about it afterwards.

So I think that really is a big concern. I think it's a little too early to say what the overall cultural impact of blogs is going to be. I can't really speak to the linguistics practice. Maybe everybody else can.

Liza Sabater: Well, actually I was discussing this with Mark last night. He described it as being an extended consciousness. And one of the things that I like to point out is that there is no such thing as a separation between virtual and real reality. It is reality.

What happens on the Internet is real and is an extension of who we are, and this flesh we carry. And it should be treated as material because what happens, what you put there actually has more of a life, may have more a life than you. Not until they take out the Internet.

Even if you take down your blog and you have archived or scrubbed, the way-back machine . . . somebody in some place in the world might have a scrapbook copy of your site up because they like it. Or like what a lot of pornographers do with Culture Kitchen -- they spoof it.

They actually take pages of my site, because I have good Google ranking, there's a whole different, I can't even like go there with Google and feminist sites and all this. But anyway . . .

(laughter)

. . . but somebody might have a copy of your site out there. And so, what you put on line is actually the closest thing to immortality.

Lauren Spees: My mom is finding out all kinds of awesome things about me from my on-line profile, and my partners.

Liza Sabater: Actually, that's the reason why I don't write about my kids. I started with the intention of writing about motherhood. And I made a very distinct decision to not give away their privacy when they have no choice in the matter. And so, I talk about Thing 1 and Thing 2.

Once in a while, on one of my blogs I put, we went to Puerto Rico and they were pretending to be the Coppertone girls, and so they had half their butts out. But I never identify them by name, because they don't have any choice in the matter and I think they should.

Gwendolyn Beetham: I thought there was one more question?

Audience Member: I was just wondering if you have a definition of a blog? You talked a lot about different properties, like links to other pages, being updated multiple times a day.

Liza Sabater: A blog is a software, a group of software that reside in a server and there's three elements to a blog. There's the script that produces the webpages, it could be written in anything from pearl to php, those are the two main programming languages in which blog scripts are written. Separate from that script, you will have a database. You need a database. You need somewhere where that script is going to

reside. And databases are software, they're soft machines. Just the way that the blog software is a soft machine. And then the third element that makes blogs different from a live journal diary is that you can pretty-up your blog.

So you have the design element separate, on what we call a cascading-style sheet. So that's basically what a blog is. It's mainly those three things working together, to create dynamically a website which is different. And that's why it's Web 2.0. Because with 1.0, there was a hard code, so you had all the code and all the text and all the images on one page.

And sometimes web pages were 15 or 20 printed pages, if you printed it out. Whereas a blog, whenever you go to a URL of a blog, it dynamically puts all these things together immediately. It doesn't stay there static, on the web.

Jessica Valenti: Just so you know -- not all bloggers are as tech savvy as Liza. I had no idea what you were talking about the entire time, so that's where I am at. When I talk about blogs, it's different from websites. I just say that it's the immediacy aspect that, if you're blogging, you update it frequently.

But it's also, you're trying to hit things like, I won't cover a story if it's a couple of weeks old. Because I feel like it's already too far behind. So it's the immediacy,

updated frequently. I don't think a blog is really a blog unless it has a comment section. That's just me.

Liza Sabater: She's talking about the practice, right.

Jessica Valenti: So, the interactive quality of it. And honestly, the sense of community, I think. Having a blog roll and linking to other bloggers and having those on-line relationships with other blogs, I think, is a huge part of it for me -- not so much for the tech.

Lauren Spees: It's really easy to start your own blog. We could have done it right now -- we could have a really awesome blog that's just about this community right here.

Liza Sabater: See, I'm from the first wavers, so I had to install the software.

Gwendolyn Beetham: I think if there are no other questions, we're going to wrap it up because I think we've gone overtime.

Janet Jakobsen: We have time. I just want to thank all of you for coming and invite you to come back to the Center tomorrow at noon, to hear about gender as a category of historical analysis. And then I want to thank all of our panelists. This was really interesting.

(applause)

Speaker: Come back and read our journal in the Spring.

Speaker: Yeah, don't forget about the on-line journal.

Janet Jakobsen: . . . www.barnard.edu/sfonline. And also, you'll be able to find where you can read all of their blogs -- Hollaback, Culture Kitchen, Feministing, et cetera.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]