

Dan Cohen's Digital Humanities Blog » Blog Archive » Creating A Blog From Scratch, Part 9: The Conclusion

Since its inception until today, this blog was powered by code I had written myself. Some people thought this took a lot of work; to be honest, it was just a few days of simple coding. As I noted at the beginning of this series^[1] on “Creating a Blog from Scratch,” rather than using existing software or services, such as WordPress^[2] or Blogger^[3], I wanted to write my own blog code so that I could experiment with the form of the blog. In general, I found it to be a great exercise that I would highly recommend. It helped me understand the genre of the blog, challenge long-standing assumptions of form and function (like the tyranny of the calendar^[4], now gone on most blogs), and think about ways one might customize a blog to fit academic needs.

But starting today, this blog will be powered by WordPress, not my own code. Am I a hypocrite? Well, yes and no. Yes, in that by switching to WordPress I have had to abandon some quirks of my original blog that had made it unique and that represented the accumulated wisdom of writing my own code. No, in that I feel I've learned enough in the process of the last two years that I can bend WordPress to my will enough to satisfy my need to customize and adapt.

More important, I had other needs that I just didn't have enough time to implement by writing more of my own code, and there were other features of WordPress—a terrific open-source project—that I really wanted:

- It took two years, but I've decided after initially disparaging comments (sentiments echoed recently by some^[5] well-known^[6] bloggers), I actually do think they are important to a blog and that my critics were right that the blog suffered without them. So

starting today I have comments at the end of each post. (My old posts will remain free of comments since I have left them in their original format.)

- I had also worried that the blog comments would be a haven for spam, but after the release of the wonderful [reCAPTCHA system](#)^[7]—which helps the [Open Content Alliance](#)^[8] transcribe digitized books while preventing spam—I felt that relatively spam-free commenting was possible.
- As successful open-source software, WordPress has engendered a universe of helpful plugins, modifications, and documentation. For instance, this blog is now [Zotero](#)^[9]-compatible, thanks to the [WordPress COinS](#)^[10] [plugin](#)^[11] by my colleague Sean Takats. And of course reCAPTCHA came with a plugin for WordPress too.
- WordPress's system for drafting and editing posts is far more advanced than the basic screens I created. Writing this post is taking me about half the time it would have taken in my old system.
- For the past six months I have been using [ma.gnolia](#)^[12] to add small posts to my feed (and to the sidebar of my old blog under “Briefly Noted”). I now can do this just as quickly using WordPress, and plan to post much more frequently starting in September.
- [Despite my best efforts](#)^[13], my old blog code failed to output valid [XHTML](#)^[14], which I believe is increasingly important in a world where non-computer devices (such as the [iPhone](#)^[15]) are browsing the web and [RSS feeds](#)^[16]. WordPress automatically writes pages in XHTML.

I suppose I should rip off of my sleeve the badge of honor from my home-grown blogging software. But I like to see the switch to WordPress as just another step in the continual improvement of this blog, and look forward to many more years of writing in this space.

This entry was posted on Wednesday, July 25th, 2007 at 10:46 pm and is filed under [Blogs](#)^[17], [News](#)^[18], [Software](#)^[19]. You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#)^[20] feed. You can [leave a response](#)^[21], or [trackback](#)^[22] from your own site.

References

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<http://lab.arc90.com/experiments/readability>