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Recommended Citation
Growney, J. "Looking at Mathematics Blogs," Journal of Humanistic Mathematics, Volume 1 Issue 2 (July 2011), pages 70-74. DOI: 10.5642/jhummath.201102.08 . Available at: https://scholarship.claremont.edu/jhm/vol1/iss2/8

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Looking at Mathematics Blogs

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Synopsis

A mathematician, poet, and poetry-math blogger offers a personal selection of links to a few of the blogs and other websites she has found wandering the Internet.

Blogging is promoted as an easy way to keep a diary – and to share it with friends. Or with everyone. Beyond that, however, many blogs offer serious learning opportunities. And the collection of blogs written by mathematicians is a diverse and interesting set.

In the following paragraphs I share links to some math-blogs and other math-rich web sites I have found of interest. Many contain valuable and well-written material – offered by mathematicians, scientists, students, and teachers. My compilation here is not comprehensive but a window into the world of blogging that can enable you to pursue your own interests.

Readers of the New York Times may be familiar with its series of Opinionator blogs – one of which was written, for 15 weeks in 2010 by Cornell mathematician Steven Strogatz. The Times also has blogs related to teaching and learning mathematics. The MAA (Mathematical Association of America) has links to several mathematical columns on its website. Not exactly blogs, but forerunners.

One of many personal blogs focused on mathematics education is Math Mama Writes – created by Sue VanHattum, a teacher of mathematics at a California community college. Scrolling down the right hand column

1 The electronic version of this essay contains live links for each phrase that appears in small caps.
2 Editor note: Sue VanHattum also has an essay in this issue of the Journal.
JoAnne Growney

at \textit{Math Mama Writes}, one finds a list of other blogs that VanHattum follows; such a “blogroll” is a frequent property of a blog – and it helps visitors to find other postings of interest. Mathematician Timothy Gowers of Cambridge University offers \textit{Gowers’s Weblog: Mathematics related discussions} – as well as advanced mathematical topics, this blog includes mathematics related to proposed legislation or other current events.

University of London mathematician \textit{Peter Cameron’s Blog} is long running with a rich variety of topics available; when you visit the site, you may wish to start with these links: \texttt{About} – which tells a bit about Peter – and \texttt{Contents} – which offers an organized list of his postings over the years. I came to Cameron’s blog because of \texttt{our common interest in the intersections of mathematics and poetry}. Cameron’s blogroll also lists other blogs of potential interest – and his final link highlights one of my favorites, \texttt{xkcd}, billed by creator Randall Munroe as “A webcomic of romance, sarcasm, math, and language.” I visit it often.

Whereas Cameron includes reflective postings as well as mathematical ones, many blogs focus entirely on mathematical research. One such is \texttt{Chromotopy} – with postings by five authors – which focuses on research in algebraic topology.

Because some writers and organizations have busy web-pages on which they post often, it is not always easy to distinguish blogs from other postings. Two of my most valued online sources are actually websites that contain blogs and much more. One of these is \texttt{+plus}, a wonderfully various online magazine for students that contains mathematics articles, book reviews, contests, and more. \texttt{+plus} welcomes visitors to its site this way: “Plus magazine opens a door to the world of maths, with all its beauty and applications, by providing articles from the top mathematicians and science writers on topics as diverse as art, medicine, cosmology and sport.” Another richly valuable online site is \texttt{Under the Microscope: where women and science connect}. The online component of the Women Writing Science project at The Feminist Press, this site includes stories from and about women involved with science, technology, engineering, and math; one of its goals is to offer a survival guide for women in science – especially young women. \texttt{Under the Microscope} also publishes news, tips, interviews and profiles. On a smaller scale, \texttt{Women in mathematics} shares personal and mathematical experiences of four mathematics PhD students in Berlin.

The March 2010 issue of the \textit{Notices of the American Mathematical Soci-}
ety had a brief article on “Math Blogs” – its author (a mathematical physicist) John Baez also offers a list of blogs to explore. Baez is also a blogger – he participates in The n-Category Café, which bills itself as “a group blog on math, physics and philosophy.”

There are several blogs that gather and present links to other blogs. Mathematics Matters is one of many “Matters” blogs that gather links to blog postings on a variety of topics. There are also Basic Math Matters and Advanced Math Matters and dozens of others. These are “monetized” blogs and the ads can be annoying. However, the sites provide a service by gathering titles of recent blog postings and you may use them as part of a search to find sites that satisfy your interests. Here is, for example, a screen-captured portion of the May 11, 2011 posting at Mathematics Matters.
Most of the blogs that interest me are not monetized – written, I suppose, for the love of mathematics – and I close by mentioning one that I find very useful. It is actually a catalogue of blogs – a bit similar to the library card catalogues of old and often a good place to start browsing. Here are some snippets that capture portions of the screen from this catalog-blog. For example, at the home-page, [http://www.mathblogging.org/](http://www.mathblogging.org/) we find these category choices:

If we click on **View the latest posts** we get a screen like this:
Selection of [Our Weekly Picks] leads to this sort of listing

The choice [View by Category] leads to six choices:

And so on. You take it from here:
Explore. Learn. Enjoy.