eAdvocacy: Basics, Best Practices and New Tools

Blogging Basics

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Learning Goals

▶ Define "blog" and "blogging"

▶ Enumerate key blog features

▶ Learn blogging best practices

▶ Understand RSS ("Real Simple Syndication")

▶ Explain key concepts, including "blog rolls", "permalinks" and "trackbacks"

▶ Appreciate the need for "proper" blog URLs

▶ Survey categories of blogging tools

Blogging

► What is it?

- "Blog" is short for "web log"
- Blogging is a web publishing model
  - More of a writing/publishing style than a technology
- It is a personal conversation between you and your readers
  - An alternative to email for reaching your audience(s)
- Blogs generally have an area of focus/expertise
  - Identity of the author(s) matters

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Writing for Blogs

► Blogs have distinct editorial style

- Show humanity and write in first person

- Express opinions loud and often; passion matters

- Share what you've been learning, reading, doing

- Post more short entries, not fewer big ones

- Re-post content from other blogs/sites

- Take feedback via comments

When Can a Blog Be Employed?

► Among other times, to:

- ▪ Narrate organizational work and progress

- ▪ Support a specific campaign

- ▪ Comment on an issue or area of expertise

- ▪ Sustain an online conversation with an audience

► But focus is key

- ▪ A blog should have a specific reason for being

Blog Features

► What makes up a basic blog?

- Post editor, for writing and publishing blog posts
- Admin tools, for managing users, settings, etc.
- Blog roll, for maintaining links to other blogs
- RSS feed(s), for letting others track new content
- Category tagging and content archives
- Easy template-based designs and customization
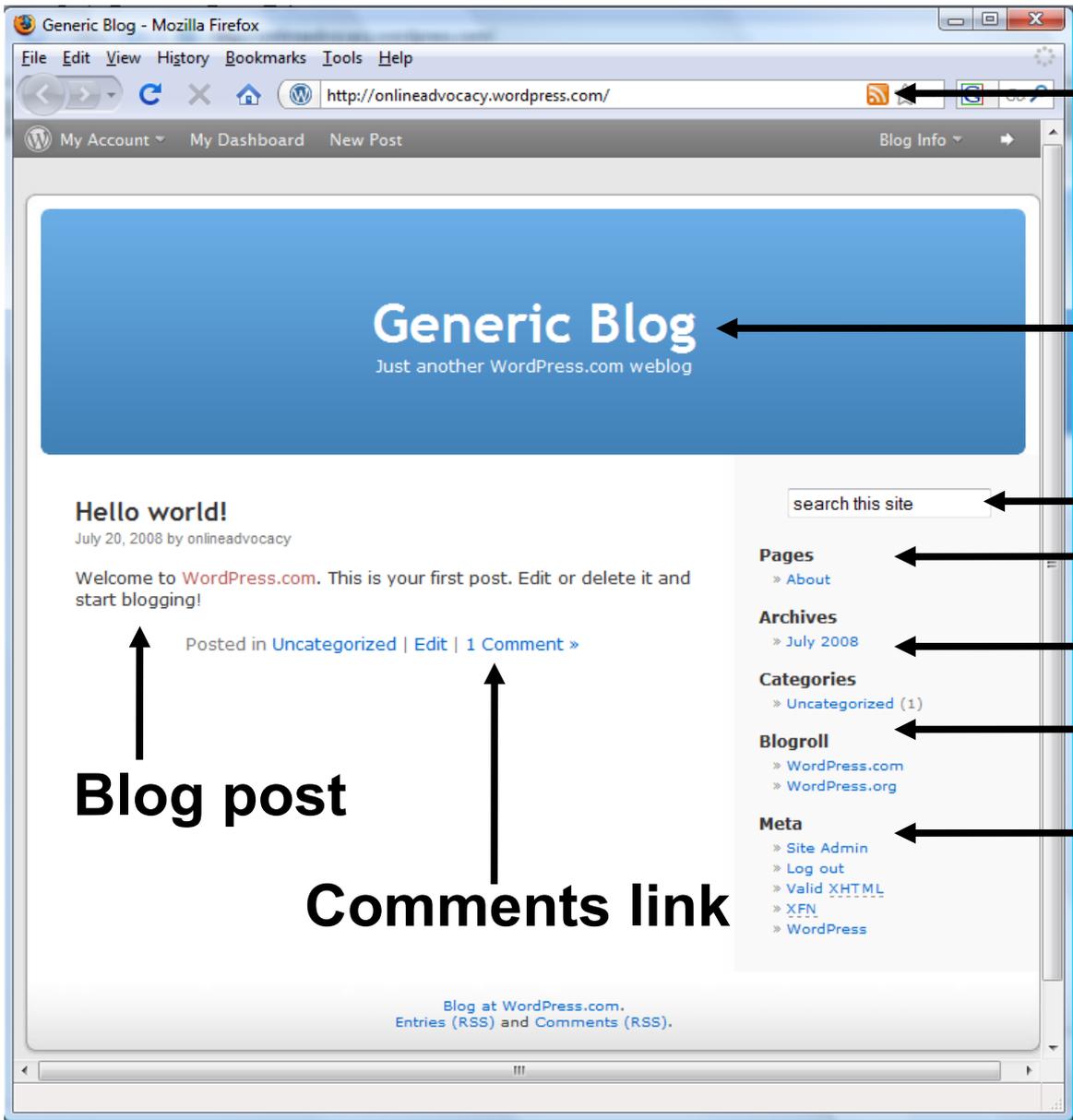
RSS Feed

Title/Tag Line

Search site

Static pages

Archives

Blog Roll

Site Admin

Blog post

Comments link

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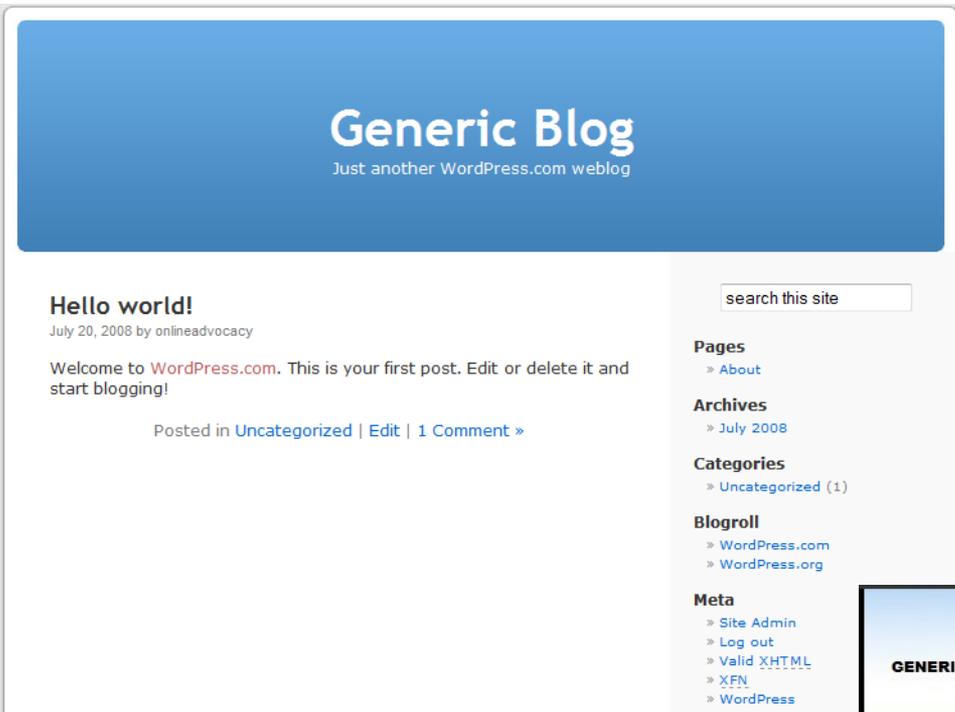
Blog using default template

Same blog using custom template

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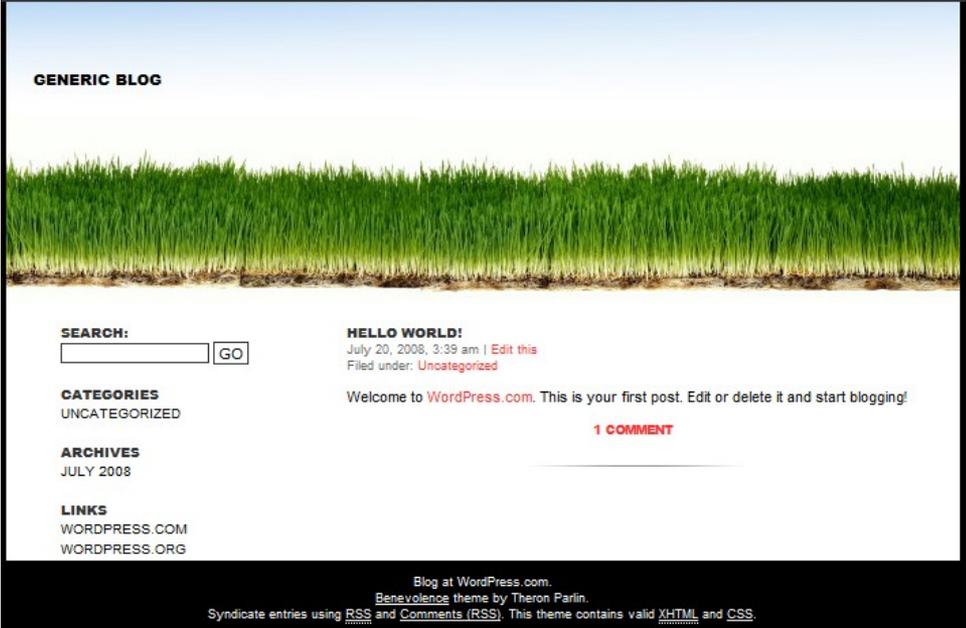
Blogging

► RSS: The killer blog technology

- Blog content is "syndicated" using RSS
  - RSS is Real Simple Syndication (and variants)
- RSS "feeds" allow interested users to see when there's new content on your blog or site
- RSS "readers" which "aggregate" are used to track a collection of feeds
- RSS is a **critical** outreach/publicity feature
- Subject lines **matter**: readers skim RSS feeds

Blogging

► Blogging best practices

- Post early and often
  - Fresh content is essential to engagement
- Allow readers to comment on your blog entries
  - Comments are important for credibility and user interaction
  - Shows that blog is read by passionate users
  - Discussion in comments can add quality content
  - But know that it's a garden you have to weed
    - Watch out for comment spam

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Blogging

► Blogging best practices

- Engage in the "blogosphere"
  - Link to other blogs
  - Post on other blogs and know what's going on
  - Commenting on other blogs can help your credibility
- Link, link, link to other sites
  - Allies, resources, coverage, etc
  - They'll hopefully link back to you

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Blogging

► Blogging best practices

- Get Involved in Blog Communities
  - Know where your audience hangs out
  - Get accounts early
  - Participate in commenting
- Target writings to "micro audiences"
  - Engage small passionate subgroups
- Distinguish between official vs unofficial blogs
  - Both have value, with **very** different control dynamics

Blogging

► Have a "permanent" blog address

- It's easy to get
  - your-org.wordpress.com
- It's much more desirable to have
  - blog.your-org.org
  - This can point anywhere, including your-org.wordpress.com
- When the address is under your domain, you control the long-term location/identity of the blog
  - When it's not you don't...

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Blogging

► Concepts

- Permalinks
  - Points to a specific blogging entry even after the entry has passed from the front page into the archives

- Trackbacks
  - Mechanism for communication between blogs
  - When blogger refers to another blog, can notify the other blog with a "TrackBack ping"

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Blogging

► Tracking other blogs

- You use an "RSS Reader" or "Feed Aggregator" to track new content from other blogs

- Basic RSS readers are built into most browsers

- Use hosted readers for maximum flexibility
  - Bloglines, Google Reader, NewsGator

- Use a service like FeedBurner if you want to know who's tracking you

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Blogging

► Blogging tool survey
- Hosted/installable
  - Wordpress.com
  - Moveabletype.com
- Hosted
  - Blogger.com, Typepad.com, LiveJournal.com
  - MySpace.com, Facebook.com
- Most CMS have blogs: Drupal, Plone, etc

Blogging

▶ Multimedia "Blogging"

- Audio Blogs
  - Podcasts
  - iTunes integration
- Video Blogs
  - AKA "vlogs"

▶ Your mileage will vary widely

- Production costs may likely outweigh benefits

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▶ Defined RSS ("Real Simple Syndication")

▶ Explained key concepts, including "permalinks" and "trackbacks"

▶ Conveyed need for "proper" blog URLs

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End Of Section

►Questions?

►Comments?

Thank You!

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