

# 10th Anniversary Post - Why Faculty Use Blogs

Written by Patricia Sohn

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<https://www.e-ir.info/2017/12/17/10th-anniversary-post-why-faculty-use-blogs/>

PATRICIA SOHN, DEC 17 2017

**E-International Relations (E-IR) was founded 10 years ago. To celebrate E-IR's 10th anniversary we asked some of our blog curators to reflect on what blogging means to them, and to their discipline.**

Blogs are the best kept secret pleasure of faculty. According to Pearson, over 90% of faculty use social media in teaching, or in relation to their professional work in some way outside of the classroom. Much of that is related to assignment of videos for classes, or assignment of on-line reading for students – which may include blogs. Nonetheless, 90% is a lot of faculty using the internet and social media in their teaching and other professional work. And yet, a brief perusal of the literature returns relatively little academic work on the subject of faculty use of blogs. To be fair, there is wonderful work on U.S. politicians and their uses of social media and the internet. And one finds more in relation to higher education and learning. But faculty use of blogs and social media – to say nothing of political scientists? You know what I am talking about. It is hardly something that most of us share willingly.

We may blog extensively to a very small and limited audience (e.g., we may share our blog “privately” rather than “publicly”). We may blog more formally as part of a chat room for classes. Or, we may blog in something closer to the format allowed by an on-line professional website, such as E-International Relations.

According to Pearson, about 22% of faculty view blogs on a monthly basis for personal use, while only about 11% post to blogs on a monthly basis for personal use. Likewise, over one-half of faculty visit Facebook on a monthly basis, while just under one-half visit Youtube; other social media sites come closer to 10% attendance by faculty on a monthly basis (all for personal use). Personal use visiting of social media is slightly higher for faculty who teach on-line courses (80% for faculty who teach on-line, 75% for those who do not). The difference for posting on-line is greater (57% for faculty who teach on-line, 47% for those who do not).

Formally, the profession tells us that blogging is the ugly step-child of academic publishing. Or, is it?

Blogging is not research – quite. It is not biography – quite. It may include a little bit of both, together with a lot of normative opinions that we are less willing (or able) to share in the classroom *or* in our academic writing. It may include book reviews, personal experience, biographical sketches of notable persons, travel blogs for friends and family, or observations that do relate to research and which we share either “privately” or “publicly”. We do not get nearly as much credit even for regular (professional) blogging in our annual reviews as we do for academic publishing. Indeed, even when related to our professional work, not all scholars would call that blogging “professional.” So, what do we get out of it?

In my experience of just over a year, blogging on E-International Relations offers the following benefits to those who contribute posts:

1. It is a way to present ideas that may not be easy or appropriate to share in other professional contexts. For fields such as comparative politics, for example, including normative analyses is not considered appropriate in professional writing or – as much as possible – in teaching either. A post on a professional blog allows faculty to work out such normative ideas, which may not be appropriate or may simply not work in other professional contexts.

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2. It allows one to work out an idea that may foster further academic research in the formal academic context be that related to research, thinking about a specific book or body of literature, local politics, etc.
3. It offers an informal writing context that can parallel the formal academic context, but in which informal discussions are acceptable and even positive.
4. It can be a venue to get your ideas out and to have them associated with your name at moments when the formal publishing world is closed to you.
5. It can raise your visibility to a far wider audience (both professional and non-professional) than formal academic publishing.

The publishing turn-around time is very fast by contrast to formal academic publishing – indeed, it is lightening-speed. This speed has drawbacks as well as benefits; formal academic publishing allows time for long-term consideration, editing, and the like. The fast publishing of the blogosphere can include errors – of thought or grammar – so be careful. But, it is a wonderful venue for self-expression when you have something to say, so – make use of it! Send us a post when you have something to say!

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### About the author:

**Dr. Patricia Sohn**, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Florida. She is co-editor of *Beyond the Death of God: Religion in 21<sup>st</sup> Century International Politics*, (University of Michigan Press 2022); and author of *Judicial Power and National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel* (SUNY Press 2017 and 2008).