BLOG WORKSHOP
Adrian Miles 16.03.04

What is a blog?	A blog is quite a few things: • an online epistolary genre. • a Content Management System (CMS) • a discourse community • a reflective critical space • a public writing and thinking In the context of this workshop we are only dealing with research blogs.
What makes up a blog?	There is no simple definition of a blog, and there are lots of different sorts of blogs. In the context we're using them they are explicit reflective research journals. These are marked by: • regular writing (including images, sound, video) • noting (through commentary and links) other online resources • noting (through commentary and links) and blogs • writing 'out' of ideas, problems, solutions • engagement with ideas internally • engagement with ideas externally
What a blog isn't	A blog is not the same as a diary or a journal. It is • public • networked • internally and externally reflective
Why use a blog?	Different people blog for quite different reasons. A research blog documents your research, your ideas and activities. It is informal, but by writing out your ideas you give them more purchase. It also helps you to form national and international research communities, locates you within an emergent community of peers,

NUTS & BOLTS

Logging in	To log in to your blog to make an entry you visit: http://hypertext.rmit.edu.au/~blogs/mt/mt.cgi You log in to administer all of your blog stuff. This is to post, edit, redesign, and so on. This is NOT the public URL of your blog.
The window	Once you've logged in to your blog there are several menus to worry about. On the left is where most of the general settings options are located. But there is also a top menu within the browser page that details help, lets you log out, view your site, and returns you to the top level page of the blog system.
Help	If you click the HELP icon at the top of the browser window (top of the webpage) you have access to very extensive help, though you need to know what you're looking for. The (?) that appears in lots of the windows in Movable Type will provide a pop up window with context specific help. This generally tells you all you need to know.

Making entries	Once you've logged in you can select New Entry to make an entry. An entry can be posted publically, or written and saved but not yet public (draft). Only you see draft entries.
	Once an entry has been made it has what is called a permalink. This is the url for the permanent location of that post. Remember that a blog frontpage constantly changes, so the permanent location of any entry is actually in the archive, not the front page. The link that is associated with every entry (usually at the bottom) is to the entry's permalink.
Editing entries	Any previous entry, no matter how old, can be edited from the Edit Entry icon (on the left). You can edit text, the date and time of publication, trackbacks, pings and comments.
Categories	Any entry can have two categories attached to it. Entries with categories are automatically collected and published to individual web pages. You can define categories using the Categories tab (on the left) or you can add new categories when you make a new entry.
What are trackbacks?	If someone in another blog writes about something in your blog, then their blog sends your blog a message. The entry that they are referring to tracks this information and includes it with your post. This lets you see (and read) who has specifically written about something you've written.
What are pings?	Pings are what one blog sends to another blog to let that other blog know that some information relevant to it exists at the first blog. (Got that?) It also can be your blog sending information to another computer about something relevant about your blog (for example that you've just updated your blog).
What are comments?	Anyone can add comments to your blog. This can be good, it can be bad. There are spammers who now spam blog comments. But it does mean that others can leave comments.
Preferences	All of these things are controlled by you. You can set default preferences for things like comments and trackbacks, and you can also edit any existing comments at any time.
Spam	Your blog system has a simple spam filter in place. This blocks comments from its blacklist, and it will also send you an email when ever a comment is posted. The email contains an URL where you can delete the comment and add any URLs in the comment to the blacklist.
Where do I set these things?	When ever you make an entry to your blog you can turn on or off things like comments, trackbacks and pings.
	You can set the default preferences for all of these things in the Weblog Config pane, then choose preferences.
How do I change how it looks?	There are two major ways. You can edit the template pages (click the Templates tab to find them), and you can customise the presentation of material as much as you like. There is extensive discussion of what Movable Type tags are available and how you use them, simply click the HELP tab at the top of the page. This is NOT for those who know nothing about how to write HTML code.
	If you are more interested in changing colours etc, then editing the CSS template lets you control these things. If you try this and stuff things up then the Movable Type web site has copies of the original templates and

shows you how to restore them. They also have some other designs and show you how you can use them.

TASKS

Log in
Go to the blog log in and log in as you. This will give you access to your blog.

Entries
Make an entry and post it to your blog. View your blog to check that it has been posted.

Categories
Open the Categories tab and define some categories. Save your categories. Make a new entry and assign a category to this entry. Publish this and view your blog. Note that a category menu is now available.

Trackbacks
Look at someone elses blog. Copy the permalink of the post and then write an entry in your blog that comments on the other person's entry. You MUST include the permalink url in your post. Save your entry. The other person's blog will now be aware of the entry in your blog about their post. (To write a link in a blog post to another web page you must type: some text).

Bookmarklet
There is a nice shortcut you can add to your browser that lets you quickly annotate any URL into your blog. You should only do this on your computer. To set up the bookmarklet (that's a Javascript that lives in your browser bar) click the MENU top in the top of the browser window, then follow the Set Up Bookmarklets link. Select what options you want to have access to. Then click the button.

Edit an entry
Use the Edit Entries tab to edit an existing entry. This is also where you can delete any unwanted entries. If you delete an entry you must REBUILD your blog to remove the entry/ies from the published version of your blog.

Changing the design
Visit the Movable Type site and have a look at some of the other (very generic) styles. Select and install one for your blog. THESE ONLY WORK IF YOU HAVEN'T MUCKED ABOUT WITH THE DEFAULT TEMPLATE.