

LIS weblogs in Argentina – A brief review

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Some time ago, I was asked to outline the current situation of bibliosphere in Argentina, the country where I was born, live and, since 2001, work as a librarian. I liked the idea and began to search the Web for interesting sites. My first findings allow me to know how recent the development of Argentinean LIS-related weblogs was: most of the sites were only one or two years old. One of the pioneering works in the field was my own personal / professional weblog, “[Bitácora de un bibliotecario](#)” (The log of a librarian), launched in December 2004, which one year later tried out an [English](#) version. At that time, it was mainly inspired by the proposals developed by colleagues in Chile, Colombia and Spain. As time passed, the space followed its own path and the weblog format has allowed me to publish several other contents, from an on-line guide about oral tradition collected by libraries (“[Tradición Oral](#)”, Oral tradition, 2005), to a workshop for librarians serving indigenous populations (“[Taller de Bibliotecas Indígenas](#)”, a workshop on indigenous libraries, 2006) and, finally, a blog on indigenous libraries (“[Bibliotecas y Pueblos Originarios](#)”, Libraries and First Nations, 2007). In three years the starting weblog has turned into a complex website with different sections, improving its design and widening its contents. 800 visits per day and more than 300.000 total hits have made this site very popular among professionals and non-professionals.

Since 2006, new proposals have been developed and Argentinean librarianship has witnessed a real explosion of LIS weblogs. Public libraries realized how blogs could become an excellent way of advertising new services and activities, and a privileged arena where on professionals and users might discuss issues of common interest. Some of them have been able to put these spaces to good use in their daily tasks. In their sites, those libraries publicize new acquisitions and literary reviews, including their patrons’ opinions and other external collaborations. One of my favourite digital pages, which is a perfect example of the kind of activities mentioned, is the weblog “[Compartiendo lecturas](#)” (Sharing readings) edited by Fernanda Rodríguez Briz from the Public Library “Sarmiento” in Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world. This site consists of one main weblog dedicated to adult readers, and of its twin space devoted to [children](#). Public Libraries like “[Sarmiento](#)” in the city of El Bolsón (Rio Negro province), “[Vicente Cacuri](#)” in the city of Tres Arroyos (Buenos Aires province), “[José Barbero](#)” in the city of Santa Teresa (La Palmpa province) and the one in the village of [San Marcos Sierras](#) (Córdoba province) are also very good examples of how public libraries can use free web-based tools in order to strength their relations with their community.

With a more socially committed profile can be highlighted a few other public libraries in Argentina. Public Library “[Cava Joven](#)” in Buenos Aires and “[H.G. Oesterheld](#)” in the city of La Plata (Buenos Aires province) include, in their blogs, news on social struggles carried out within their community, as well as a series of services and activities that could be labelled as “alternative” by orthodox librarians.

I would like to underline two weblogs also connected with public libraries that, in my opinion, have a very particular background. The first one is “[Ave Félix](#)”, a blog where a

girl from Buenos Aires explains her project of turning her own books collection into a public, community library. The second is a [weblog](#) where it is described the history of Tablada neighbourhood and its public library “Constancio C. Vigil”. Both of them are emblematic places in the main city of Rosario (Santa Fe province) since they were one of the settings of government repression during the last Argentinean military dictatorship.

Little by little, librarians discovered that, in addition to being platforms for promoting services and activities, blogs could become excellent meeting places for information workers living in certain geographic areas. This way, spaces for sharing experiences, doubts and concerns were created, and new weblogs appeared. “[Bibliotecarios de La Matanza](#)” (Librarians from La Matanza, edited by Norma Cancino), brings together librarians from La Matanza city and allow them to use the virtual space for exchanging news. Other examples are “[Corazón patagónico](#)” (Patagonian heart, edited by Diana Rodriguez) for Patagonian librarians, and “[Bibliofaro](#)” (Biblio-lighthouse) for librarians working in the neighbourhoods and cities surrounding Buenos Aires.

School libraries, as public ones, soon became aware of the great power of having a free, easy to update space on the web. Then, blogs like “[La biblio 32](#)” and the one belonging to the school “[José Ingenieros](#)” began to be known online.

At the same time, specialized librarians and LIS researchers started using weblogs as easy-to-use and widely-accessible platforms. Carolina De Volder launched her blog “[Acceso Abierto](#)” (Open Access) with useful OA contents and reliable sources being continuously published. On her part, Diana Rodriguez created “[BiblioTICando](#)”, a trade-mark weblog where she puts forward ideas related to Library 2.0 and sets out new ICTs. Ana Chiessa added a new proposal to the existing ones presenting “[Alfabetización informacional](#)” (Information literacy). These blogs were designed as real websites where scholar news, specialized links and current up-to-date research are published, providing the same benefits as a site but avoiding its costs and technical problems.

Blogs development has help professionals understand the increasing possibilities of such spaces. Nowadays they include valuable and interesting resources, ideas, experiences and news to be shared, turning them into a community centre where information is placed to other participants and occasional readers’ benefit. With this view were created both the cooperative space “[Club de ideas del bibliotecario escolar](#)” (The school librarian’s club of ideas) and María Elena Bonora’s “[De biblioteca](#)” (About the library).

Associations and official library or library-related groups also noticed the opportunities that weblogs offered, and developed their own proposals, in order to provide updated information to their members and encourage their participation. One of the first blogs of this kind was the one edited by the “[Asociación de Bibliotecarios Profesionales de Rosario](#)” (Rosario city association of professional librarians). Other examples are the excellent platform created by “[BookCrossing Argentina](#)” -where stories and ideas are included-, the institutional blog of “[Argentina BNC Bibliotecas](#)” (Libraries of bi-national centres in Argentina) and the one belonging to the “[Asociación de literatura infantil y juvenil de la Argentina](#)” (Argentinean association of literature for children and young people).

Finally, it can be observed that different contexts have given birth to a wide range of experiences according to the needs and interests that motivated them. The Library of the Medicine School of the National University of the Comahue (Rio Negro province) has developed its own [blog](#) to present their services. A similar goal is fulfilled by the virtual library [blog](#) of IEF CTA (Studies and Training Institute of the Argentinean Workers

Union) in the city of Rosario. With great satisfaction anyone can notice that even little, alternative libraries have discovered the “magic” of weblogs: the Association of theatre actors and workers in the province of Chaco (ATTACH) has developed a virtual library blog called “[El Público](#)” (The public).

I believe that LIS bloggers will continue to increase their number in the future, and a good reason for this growth might have any relation with the amazing possibilities that these digital tools provide to users with little knowledge on web-page edition, and the almost inexistent maintenance costs. The final products depend mainly on the imagination of the author(s): with simple, creative designs and adding other basic elements (videos from YouTube, pictures from Flickr, music from Radioblog, links to fotoblogs, free file downloads from RapidShare and so on), any weblog can display a very attractive and interesting interface. In addition, blogs offer opportunities for multi-authorship and active participation of readers / users, as well as the chance of including links, book fronts, literary quotes and excerpts, pictures and last-minute information. And, what is probably the most important point, though I have left it to the end: weblogs allow independence. In a world of ideological pressures, censorship and mainstream, globalised culture, this is a remarkable feature.

If you have not “swallowed the *weblogs-bait*”, just give them a try. The experience can change you... and make some difference in many persons of your community.