



Webwatch Blogging for real

Over recent years, blogs have become an extremely popular way for people to share ideas and opinions. Even our very own web editor has started his own blog, combining news about the ATM website and interesting thoughts relating to the maths he encounters in the world. The articles in blogs are only the start of the story: comment sections on the larger blogs offer a very interesting read, particularly when someone disagrees with the opinion in the original post.

Blogs can be a great way to challenge your own thinking, as well as a source of wonderful ideas to use in your own classrooms. We thought we'd share a few of our favourites, concentrating this time on those containing useful resources and lesson ideas.

dy/dan (<http://blog.mrmeyer.com/>), written by Dan Meyer, a young US maths teacher, is a really good read. He has strong views about teaching, instructional design, and in particular the use of technology to both aid and harm learning. He often uses one question or one image as the focus for an entire lesson. For example, a lesson on simultaneous equations which starts by exploring how many Styrofoam cups it would take to build a tower taller than the teacher (<http://blog.mrmeyer.com/?p=692>). In his posts he often talks about the false assumptions his classes make, the questions or images he uses to challenge these assumptions and possible extensions to the original question. We particularly like some of the lesson resources he makes available, such as Graphing Stories (<http://blog.mrmeyer.com/?p=213>) (a set of ten videos to use when teaching distance-time graphs), and an entire year's worth of Geometry lessons (<http://geometry.mrmeyer.com>), plus handouts.

The adventures of Alexandria Jones and her family, taking a tour through the history of mathematics, are just one of the resources available on **Let's Play Math!** (<http://letsplaymath.wordpress.com/>) The blog was originally written with home-schoolers in mind, and it retains a distinct focus on games and activities which can be used both in and out of the classroom. Highlights for us include the aforementioned series of Alexandria Jones articles (<http://letsplaymath.wordpress.com/alexandria-jones/>), twenty things to do with a hundred chart (<http://letsplaymath.wordpress.com/2008/09/22/things-to-do-hundred-chart/>), and a review of resources on using journals in maths classes (<http://letsplaymath.wordpress.com/2008/10/06/writing-to-learn-math-ii/>).

Mathnotations (<http://mathnotations.blogspot.com/>) by Dave Marain, now in his third year, concentrates on 'developed math investigations that are more than one inch deep, math challenges, Problems of the Day and standardised test practice'. The material is suitable from late primary to A-level and beyond. Some investigations are his own creation, like this lesson on probability and strategy (<http://mathnotations.blogspot.com/2008/12/teaching-probabilities-and-strategies.html>), while some are developed from SAT/ACT questions, such as 'how many 3-digit even integers have at least one digit equal to 2?' (<http://mathnotations.blogspot.com/2008/12/just-another-sat-type-combinatorial.html>). We particularly enjoy reading the thoughts on implementing and extending the investigations which accompany each post.

Unlike the previous three, **360** (<http://threesixty360.wordpress.com/>) has several different authors, all maths faculty at Nazareth College (<http://www.naz.edu/>).

This collaboration has resulted in a wide variety of interesting links, articles and maths problems, mainly suitable for A-level classes, as well as a recurring mathematically-inclined dinosaur. Favourite articles include: teaching induction by using examples of Patterns That Fail (<http://threesixty360.wordpress.com/2008/10/26/one-two-three-four-six-again-and-then-again/>); an article analysing a *Top Gear* challenge (<http://threesixty360.wordpress.com/2008/12/09/how-fast-could-they-have-gone/>); and a survey of mathematical jokes (<http://threesixty360.wordpress.com/2007/12/06/so-a-horse-walks-into-a-bar/>), particularly for the comments! 360 is one of the nominees for 'Best Group Blog' in the 2008 Edublog awards.

There are hundreds more blogs out there covering education, or mathematics, or both. One great way to find interesting new authors and articles is to browse through the archives of the Carnivals of Mathematics (http://blogcarnival.com/bc/cprof_1049.html) and Education (http://blogcarnival.com/bc/cprof_5.html). These are collections of interesting articles, submitted by their authors, and assembled by a different editor each week. The only problem is finding the time to read all the interesting material!

If this survey has inspired you to start your own, then there are many free blogging sites out there, from general ones like **WordPress** (<http://wordpress.com>), to education-specific ones such as **Edublogs** (<http://edublogs.org>), or even the NCETM (www.ncetm.org.uk/blogs).

Jon and Jenni Ingram are members of the ATM ICT group.

Note: Visit the www.atm.org.uk and read the article online so that you can visit the 'blogs' through the associated links.

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