



## Guidelines for Effective Blogging\*

### Why blog?

- It allows us to talk directly about our culture, our field of work, the organizations we belong to, and our *way of thinking*.
- It reflects URI principles of self-organizing, decentralized communication and welcomes the gift of diversity. Content is driven by the members of the organization, rather than the organization itself. Content is thus juicier, more relevant, and reflects a more real picture of what URI is and does around the world.
- The blog is the engine that drives the entire social media network online.
- New and regular content on the blog boosts search engine optimization (higher page rankings on search engines, e.g. Google) and increases web traffic, thus raising the visibility of your own work, the URI's mission and the work of its members around the world.

### Writing Do's and Mini Tutorials

#### ▪ Keep the headlines punchy

- o An intriguing, outside-the-box headline for your blog will attract people and make them want to check out your post. Of course, depending on what kind of post it is, you may want to use a more serious or formal tone.
- o Keep it simple.
- o Use keywords, not only is this good for search engine optimization, but some readers are looking to read something particular.
- o An effective title draws people into reading more because they feel you've got something to say that they NEED to hear.
- o A cryptic title can be good and bad, so can a descriptive title. The idea is to mix it up and match it to your writing style and what the rest of the posts are about.
- o Avoid jargon. Not everyone who reads your post will know what "interfaith" means. Try to use language that anyone off the street can understand.
- o Know your audience – scan the comments and posts of other visitors to the URI community website, be aware of what others are writing on their blogs on [www.uri.org](http://www.uri.org) and on the URI email lists.

#### ▪ Keep your posts short

In most cases, the max length of a post should be 500 words.

Other ideas: If you find yourself writing a long post, this might be a good opportunity to begin a series. Turn that long post into multiple short posts. Be sure to lead with a "this is a series" intro and cross link to all the blog posts in the series. Notifying the audience when they will be able to read the next post is also a good idea ("Come back tomorrow for the next part in this series"). You can write all the posts at once and timestamp the publish time.

#### ▪ Make them scannable

One [study](#) found that only 16% of people read word for word when they are online and another found that the average person only comprehends about 60% of what they read. Rather than read word for word - web reader 'scan' pages for information - looking for key words, phrases and visual cues.

- o Lists - keeps you from rambling, looks neat, easy to link to, persuasive (a long list adds to your case), may help you write (easier than paragraphs)
- o Don't forget formatting (bold, underline, caps, italics) - don't go overboard, but changing the style of the text, helps with readability and flow

o Headers & subheader - great for post structure

▪ **Art, art, art**

Whenever possible, which should be always, insert a photo, illustration, a screen shot, a video clip, into your post. This will make a big difference in getting people to check out your posts. You can pluck art from [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) (make sure it's been designated Creative Commons), which, of course, helps in spreading the post. Even better, pluck art from Flickr that URI has shot. Images not only grab attention, but can be used to break up long chunks of text. Makes the post scannable and easier to read.

▪ **Link to others!**

The more links to other sites (e.g. other organizations you are connected to or like), especially to blogs similar to URI's, the better. Among other benefits, such as boosting page ranking and web traffic, it gets the folks to whom we're linking to check out the post, and, we hope, comment upon it. Of course, this means we should also comment on theirs...

**Ways to bring in readers to your blog**

▪ **If you write they will come...**

People are just waiting for us to post our thoughts, we just need to supply them with our content.

▪ **Encourage comments on your post**

Readers who leave comments are more likely to return to our blog, so end posts with a question. Have a top list, but only write about 8 things and leave the rest to the readers. Leave the discussion open.

▪ **Link to other blogs**

▪ **Interact with other members on [www.uri.org](http://www.uri.org)**

Be sure to respond to all comments on your posts.

▪ **Comment on other people's blogs**

Again, the idea here is to get people to come to our site and see what we're about. Enough intelligent comments, and people may want to find out more about you.

▪ **Add blog URL to signature on emails**

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▪ **Retweet/post to Twitter, Facebook**

\* These guidelines were adapted from a Blogging Workshop by the designers of the new [www.uri.org](http://www.uri.org) website, due for launch by April 2010, Hot Studio, Inc. San Francisco