

• **WEBLOGS** -BIT1 Laboratory Exercise- Friday Labs- David Martland

*Written Assessment*

*Submission - 21<sup>st</sup> November*

WEBLOG USED: [www.xanga.com](http://www.xanga.com)

WEBLOG ADDRESS: <http://premium.xanga.com/home.aspx?user=constantino2k>

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The objective of the exercise was to set-up a Web Log and gain experience with web based tools. I think I have succeeded with this and have had fun making my Web Log. I started the exercise by viewing some existing weblogs at a range of sites, it seems most members use their weblogs as diaries to keep track of their personal thoughts, and tell the world, whilst others use their weblogs to talk about their hobbies or interests. I have decided my weblog will be based around my passion, 'Films', to limit the subject area I will be concentrating on recently released and soon-to-be-released films.

**WEBLOGS**

I took the opportunity to start re-viewing the different sites available I looked at the following:

- [www.pitas.com](http://www.pitas.com)
- [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)
- [www.xanga.com](http://www.xanga.com)

I looked at existing Bloggers on these sites and possible functions



Xanga offers two types of accounts, the Classic and the Premium accounts. The Classic account is free but you must pay to obtain a Premium account, although for a trial period at the beginning of your subscription to Xanga they allow you to use the Premium account, offering advantages such as:

- Spell check
- Removal of Banner Ads
- The ability to upload images to your weblog from PC
- Larger choice of fonts and colours for text and backgrounds

-And Premium Members can join six bloggings, whilst Classic Members can only join three.

The premium account costs \$25 per year, translating roughly to £15, or for a one off payment of \$100 (£60) you can have a lifetime subscription to Xanga Premium. The classic account offers a much simpler version of the account, but ultimately apart from a reduced selection of colours and fonts the only big difference is that you cannot post images on weblog from your computer. This is a shame, however I will be able to in my trial period and considering the context of my weblog, any pictures I include will be copyrighted. I signed up for a Xanga account and found the preliminary use very easy and flexible.

## **BLOGGER**

There is also a subscription version of Blogger, called Blogger Pro, much like Xanga's Premium and Classic accounts. It offers advanced functionality, and you can upgrade at any time. The basic Blogger service is completely free. The only thing they require is a link back to Blogger.com. I have also signed up for a Blogger account and the early use is very easy also.

## *Pitas.com*

Immediately after visiting Pitas it struck me as a more mature, grown-up version of weblogging. The homepage is very bland, and quite uninviting. The weblogs I looked at from here were also quite plain and none seemed as exciting as the weblogs at Blogger and Xanga. I know this seems quite superficial, so I did sign up for an account, but I realised quite quickly that I would be able to make a much more excited page based at either Blogger or Xanga. So I decided to take Pitas out of the running.

 xanga.com

vs.

 **BLOGGER**

I had accounts at both of these sites and before continuing I had to decide which weblog to use. I had made a few entries into each of my weblogs, but found Xanga much more to my liking, perhaps this is because it is a lot easier to use for a first time weblogger! I found adding new entries and editing the site a lot easier on Xanga, so rather than spend time figuring out Blogger, I decided to go ahead and use Xanga to create my weblog.

**MY WEBLOG - 'FILM 2003' - <http://premium.xanga.com/home.aspx?user=constantino2k>**

### *SET-UP*

After navigating to the Xanga homepage, I began the process of setting up my weblog. This required my e-mail address, and I had to verify I was at least 13 as well as agreeing to the terms. I then had to name my blog, and choose a default template. Now I had the first opportunity to personalise my weblog, changing my profile Image (which I changed to a film reel), adding a welcome message and adding personal details.

### *CUSTOMISING*

After setting up my weblog, I had to make my first entry I briefly wrote about the film 'The Italian Job', which I had seen the night before. Up until this point I encountered no problems. Over the following few days I posted more entries onto my weblog, to get it started. I then began editing and personalising my weblog. Xanga has an option of 'Look and Feel' on the page and I used this change the appearance. I did consider using a pre-designed skin, but decided against it, as it would mean my weblog would have been designed by someone else and would limit the extent to which I could personally edit it. So I began customising the fonts, text sizes, colours, background colours, layout, I removed the search banner from the top and added some pictures to the entries.

### *PROBLEMS*

I decided I would like to have a background image instead of a plain colour, but to do this I needed to provide the URL of the image, and was prompted:

*'NOTE: You'll need the image to be uploaded somewhere on the Internet for it to appear on your site'*

I originally had no idea what I was supposed to do, so I tried to research about it online. I found out a little more and I was advised in class that I would have to upload my image, using FTP, but as I had no prior knowledge of this it was recommended that I try something else with my weblog.

I also decided to include a site counter. On the advice of Xanga, I visited [www.sitemeter.com](http://www.sitemeter.com), where I signed up for a site counter. I was able to customise my site counter before I was given the html. I then had to paste this html into the look and feel section of my weblog. The site counter was then visible on my weblog, and regular updates are being e-mailed to me regarding the number of visits, length of visits and averages of both.

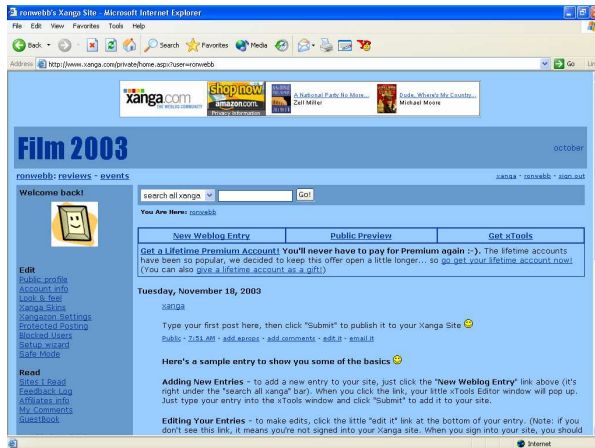
I also decided to join some Bloggings; these are similar to Webrings in that they group together weblogs of similar content. At present I am a member of three weblogs:

- !!!I like movies!!!
- !!!CRAZI MOVIE!!! and
- -->Harry Potter 4 Ever<- -

All three are sub-categories of the 'Movie' category in the Xanga Blogging Directory. They are visible on the side menu in my weblog. Below them is the section 'Sites I Read'. I became quite interested in some of the weblogs, and began viewing some of them regularly, so I decided to register with them. Unfortunately, so far no one has registered with my weblog, but I will continue to add entries and will hopefully gain a few subscribers who are interested in what I have to say!

Under the 'Get Involved' section, there is the possibility to add links from the weblog to websites, I initially included a list of links, but then decided to use a Blogroll on my weblog. To do this I signed up for an account at [www.blogrolling.com](http://www.blogrolling.com), but I ran into some trouble setting up the Blogroll and could not properly connect it to my weblog. In an attempt to combat this I contacted the site, but I received no reply. After some continuing efforts I think I have succeeded in connecting the Blogroll to my weblog, however it has been quite temperamental.

Also, my premium account has expired, meaning all my images had to be removed from my weblog; however this was not really a problem, as I was expecting it, although it did drastically change the appearance of my weblog.



This screenshot shows the appearance of my weblog after my first entry, the day I started the blog.

This screenshot shows my weblog after all the changes I made, and after many more entries



## CONCLUSION

Overall I think my weblog has been a success, I have enjoyed the exercise and I am very pleased with the final weblog, and I am keen to continue with it. It has taught me some basics, which I am sure to build on in the future. I have also received the first subscription to my weblog, which is excited and re-kindled my interest somewhat. I did encounter a few problems, but managed to deal with them to the best of my ability and have learnt from the problems, coming out of the exercise with experience knowledge and a sense of satisfaction.