

## Blogging: Reaching a Global Audience Easily and Affordably from Everywhere



By Teresa Crawford



Humaninet has jumped with both feet into the world of the social Web. We have put to work a photo sharing account, blog, social bookmarking and video blogging in support of our outreach to the humanitarian nonprofit tech community and those interested in our Sim Day events.

On September 12th we launched our *first* blog at [www.humaninet.blogspot.com](http://www.humaninet.blogspot.com) and a photo sharing account on Flickr at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/humaninetpics>. We are now able to post content in a hurry, from any location that has an Internet connection.

A blog is short for "Weblog," a type of Web site that is used like a journal or diary and which presents links, photos, video and audio files, and more. Readers may even add comments to the blog postings.

Gregg Swanson, HumaniNet executive director, made blog posts over a wireless connection from the outdoor Sim Day location in Mountain View, California. "After a few minutes of instruction, it was easy to send posts and photos, which one can do by email or a web form," reported Gregg. "In a field environment, even in a disaster response, anyone who can send email can post current information, ideas, observations, and up-to-the-minute pictures,."

Social web tools have some interesting and potentially powerful applications to the world of humanitarian response and non profit technology. The ability of those in the field to communicate and share information seamlessly with managers, decision makers and supporters at home is critical. Blogs and photos sent from field locations can help managers make informed decisions, keep home staff informed, and garner much needed support for our work. In addition, we can mobilize participants for events and demonstrations, further widening our pool of volunteers and spreading our message.

The blog at Blogspot (a free service) and the Flickr pro account (which costs \$25 for the upgraded version) were both set up in about 30 minutes. The larger time investment came in the customization of the tools. It took us about two hours to get both systems working the way we wanted. But the customization has paid off, in that photos and blog entries are easy to find, and visitors can comment on entries and photos and communicate with HumaniNet staff.

Until now we kept these new tools on the QT as we practiced writing entries, sending entries in via e-mail, using the commenting function, adding in tags and mapping photos, creating sets to organize them. Testing has paid off and we now have a great user process and a well working system. In addition to the basic features of the blog and photo sharing account we added social bookmarks or tags to each photo. Tags make it easier for those monitoring certain topics with a tagging program such as Del.icio.us or RSS feed to find out about new content on topics of interest to them. We chose to use the nptech tag which is the tag of choice for those working in the nonprofit technology sphere. We also added a humaninet tag to clue those in our social web into our new content.

Let us know what you think about these tools. We think they are worth the investment and plan to use them during upcoming field events.

Resources:

\* What is a blog? See [Blogger.com](http://Blogger.com) for a description.

\* Blogs that mention our blog -Beth Kanter's Blog  
[http://beth.typepad.com/beths\\_blog/2006/09/seth\\_mazows\\_rec.html](http://beth.typepad.com/beths_blog/2006/09/seth_mazows_rec.html)

\* Videoblog entry from Seth Mazow at Interplast -  
<http://ngimagination.blip.tv/file/77107/>

\* Blogging tools reviewed by Idealware -  
<http://www.idealware.org/>

\* Social Web or Web 2.0 definition on Wikipedia -  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_2.0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_Web](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Web)