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What the **Betting** On '**Blogs**' Holds For **Newspapers**

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What will be the more authoritative Internet news source in five years, one of the most established **newspapers** in America or a ragtag collection of news diaries called Web logs?

That's the subject of a \$ 2,000 wager (www.longbets.org) between Martin Nisenholtz, chief executive of New York Times Digital, and Dave Winer, creator of a Web publishing tool called Userland Radio. It reflects a growing debate among writers at offline and online media over how the Internet will reshape journalism.

Web logs -- "**blogs**," for short -- are a diary-like publishing format increasing in popularity thanks to tools making it easy to create and update them. A **blog** is stuffed with brief commentary and links to other Web writings and news, with updates often coming several times a day. **Blogs** are as varied as the people creating them, covering topics from the Arab-Israeli conflict to their creators' love lives to town-gown relations in College Park.

Winer bet that by 2007, a Google search on five keywords representing the year's top news stories would rank Web logs higher than the New York Times site.

"I think it's a sucker bet," Winer said in a phone interview. "There are half a million Web logs now, and in five years there'll be a lot more."

But in accepting the bet, Nisenholtz wrote, "Readers need a source of information that is unbiased, accurate and coherent. News organizations like the Times can provide that far more consistently than private parties can."

Winer considers Web logging a new form of journalism and estimates 10,000 high-quality **blogs** exist. His own (www.scripting.com) links to numerous examples; the Web site of another **blog**-software developer, Blogger (www.blogger.com), offers another set of links.

But the format has drawn ridicule from ink-stained scribes, most recently Boston Globe columnist Alex Beam, who trashed **blogs** as a place "where no thought goes unpublished."

Financial Times columnist Louise Kehoe once penned a similarly derisive article. But she had a change of heart and announced she would start blogging herself next week at FT.com in a journal called -- what else? -- the **Blog**.

Not all personal publishing is flourishing. Hallmark said Wednesday it will close HallmarkStories.com on May 9. The site let people create scrapbooks by uploading and arranging photos online, then Hallmark would print and mail the resulting albums to their creators. A Hallmark spokeswoman said a combination of too much cost, too few users and the

slow growth of broadband Internet access sank the site.

Competitors remain online, notably MyPublisher.com, which sells custom albums for less.

The trial of Slobodan Milosevic on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in the former Yugoslavia resumed last week after he recovered from the flu. The trial is being Webcast live from a United Nations tribunal at The Hague, with an archived version available after each day, courtesy of Bard College's Human Rights Project and New York-based International Center for Transitional Justice. If you're worried about missing anything, you've got time to catch up -- the trial could last two years.

hague.bard.edu

Comics on the Web launched a graphics-drenched, \$ 1-a-month subscription site this month at the Lycos Web portal. Created by CrossGeneration Comics, the service includes 50 digital comic books and aims to grow to more than 160 by 2003. CrossGen says its starting price amounts to 3 cents a comic and will drop to a half-penny by the end of the year.

lycos.comicsontheweb.comE-mail Leslie Walker at walkerl@washpost.com

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