

Blog Content & Style Guide

Do you have questions or feedback about this document? Please email Brianna at [briannahmarshall\[at\]gmail\[dot\]com](mailto:briannahmarshall[at]gmail[dot]com).

This guide was partially adapted from the UW-Madison Research Data Services blog workflows.

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Audience

Our main audience includes librarians and technologists who work in libraries.

The blog is geared toward education and current awareness about best practices, policies, tools, trends, etc. related to library technology. The scope of appropriate topics is intentionally broad and inclusive.

Shoot for informative and pragmatic posts. Editorial content is generally to be avoided unless reporting about a debate in the field or done as a balanced critique.

Editorial Process & Scheduling

You will be set up with WordPress credentials when you first begin as a regular writer or committee liaison.

First, check the blog schedule.

- **If you are a regular writer**, please schedule your post for a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday (unless none are available, in which case feel free to select an open Tuesday or Thursday).
- **If you are a LITA committee liaison** needing to post an announcement, event, or other content, please schedule your post for a Tuesday or Thursday.

It's important to keep the schedule as updated as possible - both to ensure that we don't have a pileup of posts on the same day and to facilitate effective promotion via social media.

Regular writers are asked to share their post via the writers' listserv to solicit feedback. Committee liaisons are asked to notify Brianna prior to publishing posts (give at least 1-2 days, please).

Suggested Content Areas

The following ideas are certainly not exhaustive – get creative! And don't discount your professional experience. What issues are you grappling with at work? What decisions are you facing? What resources do you recommend to others? Anything can be fodder for a blog post.

How-to posts

Posts that very clearly outline how to do something; templates, checklists and step-by-step approaches work well.

Idea posts

The library tech landscape changes quickly and we want to be evaluating trends and figuring out what is coming next. Are there conversations you think we need to have to move forward? Is there something going on that you want to call out that is not true or not working? What are the current trends?

Tools posts

Discuss/evaluate existing platforms and tools.

Conference/event reports

Write up a summary of the event, ideally with links to resources like video captures, slides, discussion forums, etc. It doesn't have to be a tech conference – you can highlight tech-related sessions.

Share your materials

Did you write useful code? Develop documentation or workflows? A slide deck that others can re-use? Share it on the blog!

How to Publish a Post

1. Log in to LITA blog (litablog.org/wp-admin)
2. From the Dashboard, click *Posts* on the left-hand menu, then *Add new*.
3. Write your text. If copying and pasting, be aware that you may introduce formatting issues.
4. Click *Add media* to insert an image into your post (required). A good place to find images is the [Creative Commons Flickr](#) (or [memes.com](#) if you're feeling bold!). Be sure to give credit (see formatting tips and tricks, below, for more guidance).
5. Click *Preview* in the Publish block on the right-hand side of the page. This is an accurate view of what your post will look like when published.
6. Need to fix something? Read formatting tips and tricks for guidance.
7. Select the category for your post
 - a. If you are a regular writer, select *Original Content*
 - b. If you are a committee liaison, select *Committees and Interest Groups*
8. Select 2-3 tags for your post.
9. Finish your post by posing a question to readers (italicized). Ask if they have done what you wrote about, if they have tips etc. Anything to get readers to engage and comment.
10. Now you are ready to schedule or publish your post. Return to the Publish block. You can either publish instantly by clicking *Publish* or you can schedule your post for a specific date and time in the future. This allows you to write and format posts on your own timeline. You'll see that by default,  **Publish immediately** posts are set to publish immediately.  Adjust the date and time, then click the *OK* button. Now when you click *Publish*, it will instead schedule the post for the new date and time. (Note: 9am is generally a good time to select – it gives us enough time to share it via social media throughout the day.)

Formatting Tips & Tricks

Chunk your content. “Chunking” refers to breaking content down into concise, easily understandable pieces of information. Employ this strategy on the blog by:

- Writing concise sentences.
- Keeping your paragraphs short. Ideally, paragraphs will show up as no more than four or five lines (likely 2-3 sentences). Big blocks of text can be overwhelming to readers.
- Using bolded subheadings, bullet points, or other formatting elements to differentiate content.

Fix spacing problems. One of the more common formatting problems in WordPress is spacing: you preview your post only to find that there’s a lot of space between paragraphs, or none. Switch from the “Visual” to the “Text” tab. Now you’ll be able to see the HTML. When you switch to the HTML, it will show you the pesky <div> or tags in places you don’t want them so that you can delete them.

Adjust how your images appear. After uploading an image to the WordPress Media Library, you’ll be able to adjust how it will appear in your post.

- Add a brief title.
- Write your attribution in the caption box. (e.g. “Image courtesy of Sarah D. [URL]” or “Image courtesy of Flickr user bmarshall. CC-BY.”) Attribution is tricky and there are multiple ways to do it right. Creative Commons provides some best practices: https://wiki.creativecommons.org/Best_practices_for_attribution
- Adjust alignment.
- You may need to save different options, preview, then revert to other options to get it right!

Licensing

By default, all posts published to the LITA blog will be made available under the [CC-BY-NC 2.0 license](#). However, we respect the right of the author to choose how their work is used and shared – if you do not want your work licensed as CC-BY-NC, contact Brianna.

Final Post Checklist

You'll know your post is ready to publish when it has...

- ✓ A title in upper caps (“Test Post” NOT “Test post”)
- ✓ Embedded links (“[helpful guide](#)” NOT “this helpful guide: example.com”)
- ✓ Appropriate category selected
- ✓ At least two tags applied
- ✓ One image (required!) including its licensing/attribution
- ✓ Reader-friendly layout and chunking
- ✓ A final question (italicized) for readers to respond to, if appropriate
- ✓ Received feedback
 - For regular writers, requesting feedback through the listserv is enough. Given our busy schedules, it is okay to post without receiving feedback.
 - For committee liaisons, email Brianna so she can review prior to publication.

Example of an excellently formatted blog post by writer Leanne Mobley:

<http://litablog.org/2014/11/5-tech-tools-to-be-thankful-for/>