

Personal Blogging, Documentary, and History

When it comes to personal blogging, documentary is the default genre. There are plenty of blogs that serve other functions, but many blogs are primarily catalogues of the life experiences of their author. Although there are quite a few blogs that focus on collecting poetry and other forms of creative writing, the vast majority of personal blogs are in some sense documentaries.

For many years, the act of making a documentary was meant to be an objective act of reporting the sights and sounds that the filmmaker, writer, or photographer encountered. However, in contemporary times there has been a movement towards embracing the subjectivity inherent in the documentary form. This means that modern documentaries often reflect the distinctive voice and sensibility of their creator, and the fact that today's documentaries often revolve around personality blurs the lines between documentary and memoir. Blogs rest somewhere between these two genres, muddying the distinctions even further. Personal blogging, documentary, and memoir are now irrevocably intertwined, for better or for worse.

Although few bloggers think of themselves as making documentaries in any formal sense, every time somebody sits down in front of a computer and types up a record of their day, they are documenting their own historical moment. The things that we take for granted about our daily lives, like the way that we use specific modes of transportation, or the kinds of products that we buy, often seem quite fascinating to people who live in circumstances different from ours, and it is this kind of fascination that is at the heart of many documentary projects. When people think about blogging, documentary is not very likely to be the first adjective that crosses their minds, but a few decades down the road it is very likely that today's blogs will be seen primarily as very subjective documentaries of our era. The people of tomorrow will almost certainly look to the blogs of today for insight into our historical moment.

When it comes to blogging, documentary may not be the aim of most people who spend their time posting their thoughts and ideas on the internet. In some ways, the documentary aspect of blogging is more of a side effect than a primary goal. However, the fact that so many people are interested in publishing these public online diaries shows that personal blogs are about more than just rumination. The fact that bloggers are so stimulated by and interested in sharing their ideas with each other reinforces the idea that personal blogs are, in some ways, documentaries meant for public consumption. Documentaries appeal to people who are curious about other ways of life, and many people who regularly read others personal blogs are looking for this same kind of new perspective.

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