Future Plans for Blogs@VT

DCSS, Fall 2021

Platform Purpose and Usage

- Launched in 2012 as a "general purpose" multi-site WordPress system with a focus on teaching & learning, but with limited account restrictions (users simply need an @vt.edu email address).

- We chose hosting partner Pressable (sole source) in 2011.

- Currently, the platform supports all sorts of usage: courses, departmental websites, organization sites, personal blogs for professors and students, etc...

- Peak usage in terms of active users/sites was in 2016.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LEARNING
AND ONLINE STRATEGIES
VIRGINIA TECH.

System Statistics

As of October 2021:

- # users: 19,355 (many have graduated)

- # of sites: 13,570 (many are "Hello world!" type sites)

- Fall 2021 courses actively using Blogs@VT: fewer than 10

- # of themes: 110 (a few are paid subscriptions, many are outdated)

- # of plugins: 101 (many are outdated)

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Reasons for a Fresh Start

- General clean-up: The system is now almost 10 years old, and the base WP installation has been updated from WordPress 3 to 4 to 5 (DB is very messy).

- Track users more effectively and secure the site with SSO/2FA.

- Tighter management of themes and plugins to avoid "sprawl."

- Reduce hosting costs by eliminating unused legacy sites and setting clearer retention policies.

- Fix the URL: lt.vt.edu was retired in 2013.

- Leverage our partnership with a new hosting provider already under contract with University Libraries.

The Plan

Overarching goal: Refocus Blogs@VT on its original purpose as a platform to support teaching and learning.

1. Setup a clean, new multi-site WP instance at Reclaim Hosting before Spring 2022 semester (blogs.tlos.vt.edu).

2. Disable new user sign-ups on blogs.lt.vt.edu in January 2022; direct instructors to use the new platform.

3. Work with the campus to allow individuals to migrate appropriate sites to our new WP instance *or* Ensemble *or* private WP host *or* …

4. Keep an "archive copy" of blogs.lt.vt.edu available/online using TLOS' AWS account for 2 additional years.

Get in Touch with TLOS

- Please let us know about needs and concerns.

- The best way for individual instructors, students, or blog owners to contact TLOS with concerns is via ServiceNow incidents (4Help).

- Anyone with departmental or college-wide concerns can reach out directly to TLOS using tlos@vt.edu.