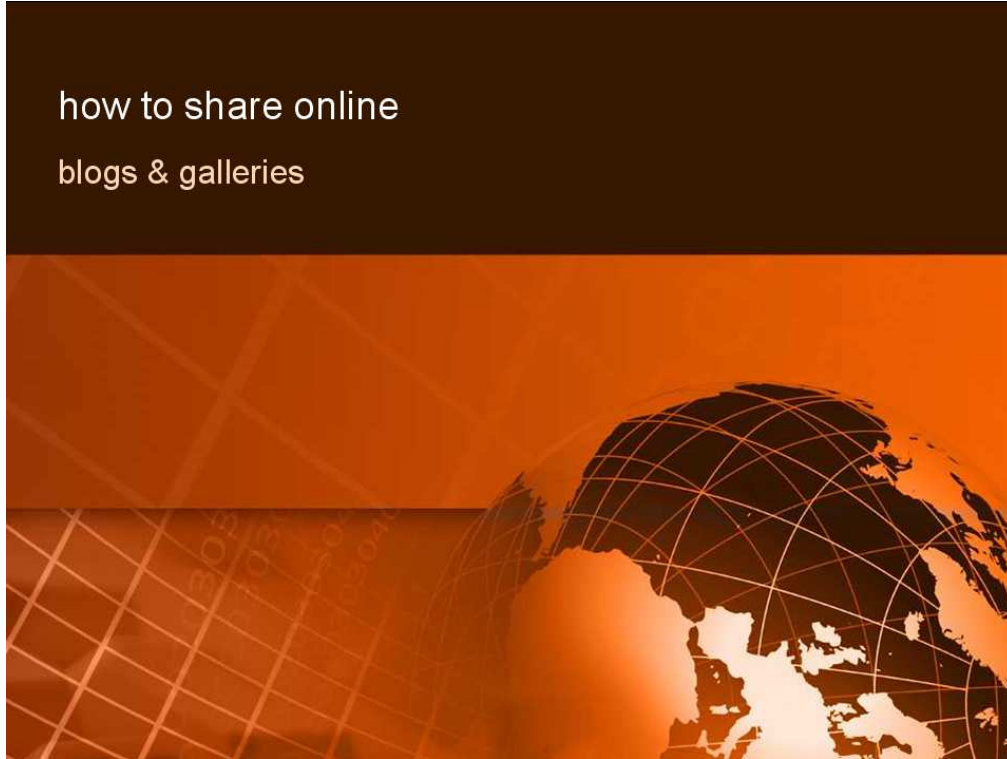

blogs & galleries

This presentation was prepared by Blake Nancarrow for the RASC Toronto Centre Members Night held on Saturday 11 April 2015 at the David Dunlap Observatory.



Supporting the “how-to” theme, this brief presentation touches on ways to share.

Specifically, to share observing logs, product reviews, product tips and tricks, and miscellaneous astronomical notes, I will discuss blogging sites.

And to share photographs, I will discuss online photo gallery sites.

situation

words

Does this describe your current situation?

Do you want to document your astronomical observations? In particular, are you interested in posting your observing log notes online for others to see?

Do you like reviewing products? Perhaps early reviews of new or upgraded products would be of interest to others.

Do you enjoy sharing knowledge, tips and tricks, workflows? Many aspects of astronomy are complex and perhaps others can benefit from your insight and discoveries.

Do you want to be able to access your notes, log book entries, product info pages, cheat sheets, life lists, etc. from anywhere? If you put your notes online in “the cloud” then (assuming you have an internet connection) you can access the information from anywhere, from any device.

Blogging sites are accessed via web browsers or tablet apps.

images

Where are all your photos?

I remember fondly sitting in friend and family living rooms, with the curtains drawn, as the slide projector whirred, clicked, and advanced and showed us the next photograph from a trip or expedition. Do you, today, gather together people to look at photos? I hazard to guess we don't partake of this activity as much.

I also suspect many of your photographs are “trapped” on a memory card. If you have, in fact, transferred the images to the computer, that might be the end of the journey. Do you “give” photos to friends and family like you did in the past with prints from negative film? Do you enlarge any of your photos and frame them? Maybe you have designated a recent photo as the background desktop image on your computer. Have you tried using your modern TV as the “new” slide projector? What about distant friends and family? Have you shared your favourite photos with them?

Internet-based photo galleries are a wonderful solution. Get your photos out of the camera and online. Facebook is a fun way of rapidly sharing photos but it clobbers them, in terms of quality and size. There are many good high-quality, photo-sharing web sites out there.

blogger

<https://www.blogger.com/features>

A popular “blogging” or web-logging site is blogger.com by Google.

It is free and easy to use. Articles are automatically date-stamped and added to the date index. It has many attractive themes, which can be customised (if you know HTML and CSS). It supports tags. Adding tags to an article or post is an excellent way to categorise and cross-reference the entry. As images are added, blogger automatically makes a thumbnail (smaller) image which hyperlinks to a large version.

I have used blogger since 2005 or so. I really like it. That I have over 6600 articles—I guess—suggests I enjoy using it.

Geoff Gaherty and Rod “Unk” Mollise use blogger too.

WordPress

<https://wordpress.com/#more-features>

Another popular blogging site is WordPress.

It too is free and easy to use. They offer nice themes. Like blogger, it supports comments. It allows the uploading of photographs into articles.

A nice feature of WordPress is that it allows for “evergreen” content, pages that you don’t want to “fall off” your site when old. This is good for life-list content that you want to have readily available. WordPress, by Automattic, has some ads.

Risa Horowitz and Mehdi Bozzo-Rey use WordPress.

flickr

<https://www.flickr.com/#section-1>

This is a free (or fee) photographic gallery site owned by Yahoo.

You can upload and share photos. It displays photos at various sizes and allows pictures to be organised into albums and streams. It supports tags and camera metadata. flickr has good permissions so you can control who can see and/or download content. The site supports comments and following. Oh, and videos! You can upload videos.

While a free account has 1 terabyte of space, there are some limitations. They have subscription plans that enable greater capacity and higher upload limits.

This is a very good option if you are a generalist, i.e. you shoot all types of photos, not just astrophotos.

It has a very nice “slideshow” mode so you can create the same effect as using the old projector!

Michael Watson and Bryon Czarnik, among others, use flickr.

AstroBin

<http://www.astrobin.com/>

AstroBin is unique. It is by astronomers, for astronomers.

It supports high resolution images in high-quality, editable formats, such as TIFF. All on a black background. It is free. It supports comments, following, tags, bookmarks, etc. It has good permission controls.

Astrophotographs are automatically plate-solved and annotated using Astrometry.net tagging.

AstroBin allows you to record many details surrounding your images, including optical path information, weather conditions, etc.

Steve McKinney and Daniel Leclerc, among others, use AstroBin.

others

There are many other tools out there. tumblr is another place one can post articles and photos. Chris Vaughan uses this, of course, for his SkyLights. 500px is a serious photographers site. Alan Dyer and Steven Fanutti use it. Lynn Hilborn and Ian Donaldson use smugmug for their online photo galleries. Some photo sites may not support video; of course, there's YouTube and vimeo. Some store their photos on Google+, Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, or DropBox.

And don't forget about your free webspace! Bell and Rogers and the like give you a (usually small amount) of webspace. In theory, you have total control over this content. This is maybe best for those who like to tinker. Google Sites and Moonfruit on the other hand lets you build a site easily with a web interface.

socialising

Once you've built it, will they come? Once you've built your gallery or blog, start telling people about it. Share the address or link with friends and family. Include it in your email footer or signature.

Within the specific environment, start following other users. They, hopefully, in turn, will follow you. If the tool supports it, *like* content by other users.

Cross-reference. Link to your latest posting or pix on Facebook or Twitter. Build a buzz.

showcase

Blake's astronomy blog: <http://blog.lumpydarkness.com/>

Blake's flickr gallery: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/10150366@N03/>

Risa's astronomy blog: <http://imaging saturn.risahorowitz.com/>

Steve's AstroBin gallery: <http://www.astrobin.com/users/SmackAstro/>

closing thoughts

A number of these tools allow for "branding" or personal identification. For example, I use my own purchased domain name for my blog.

Many of these tools support monetising as well.

Questions? Email me: *astronomy AT computer-ease DOT com*.

What are you waiting for? Start sharing!

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