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Marianne Hebert
Associate Librarian
SUNY Potsdam

What the heck is a ...?

Ref Pod:

A pod is a "social group of cetaceans." We call the two clusters of public workstations in our reference area "pods."



Active Desktop:

A feature of Microsoft Windows that allows web pages to be displayed as the desktop wallpaper.

Blog:

You already know what a blog is. A blog or "weblog," is an easy-to-use website where "bloggers" can post news and ideas to the web.



LIVEJOURNAL

blogwise

REF POD BLOG and

So what is a Ref Pod Blog and Active Desktop?

Crumb Library uses the active desktop with a blog to post timely information directly to the desktops of the public PCs in our Reference area.

Generally we post helpful hints, information about library and computer use policies, and to promote library services.

For systems problems, such as database and printer outages, we want to be able to update the desktop as quickly as possible (in addition to posting signs, and hollering across the reference desk).

Using the active desktop with a blog, we can make instant changes to 16 PCs, simultaneously with one blog posting, from anywhere in the world, 24 x 7.

(In reality, we usually do it from the reference desk during open hours).

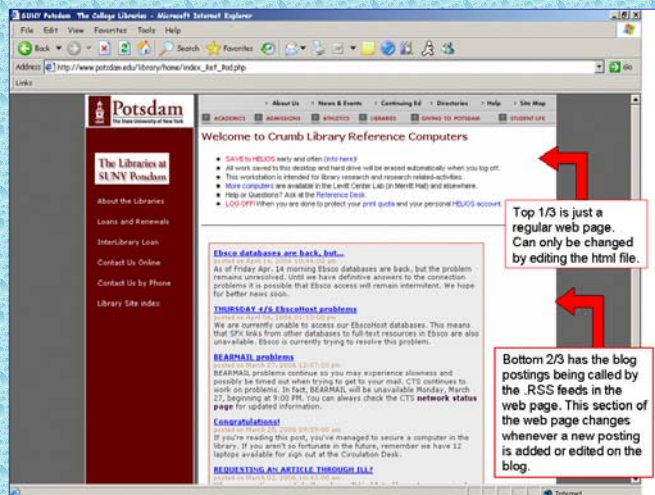
Desktop shortcuts

Active Desktop

ACTIVE DESKTOP

Looks complicated but it is pretty easy to do!
And it is cool!

Step 1.
We created a Ref Pod webpage, that includes a few do's and don'ts about using the computers in the Reference area.



Step 2:
We created an active desktop on each public workstation. The active desktop "pulls" the Ref Pod web page (created in Step 1).

Step 3:
We created a "Ref Pod Blog" at Blogger.com and invited all our Reference Librarians to be members.

Step 4:
We used RSS feeds to populate the Ref Pod web page with the Ref Pod Blog postings. The RSS feed is one line of java script pasted into the html code of the Ref Pod web page (created in Step 1).

Poster session details and step-by-step instructions are available at:
<http://www2.potsdam.edu/hebertm/refpodblog>

Policies & Training Issues

Who should be blog members and should they be administrators?

- Only blog administrators can edit and delete postings made by everyone.
- Regular blog members can only edit and delete their own postings.
- If someone posts a notice regarding a database problem, only an administrator can delete or edit that posting (i.e. during the next reference shift) when the problem is resolved.
- **HINT: Make everyone an administrator!**

What types of items do we post to the blog?

- Only major system outages. We found that posting short term or intermittent database problems was hard to keep up-to-date.
- Reminders about our no food or drink policies at the computer workstations.
- Changes to library hours, e.g. extended study hours at the end of the semester.
- Welcome back messages at the beginning of each semester.
- Promotion of library services such as ILL and circulating laptops program.

Not everybody is comfortable with technology.

- Not everyone needs to understand how to create an active desktop or RSS feed.
- The only thing reference librarians need to know is how to create and edit a blog entry.
- Only systems coordinators need to know how to create and manage the blog site, create the active desktop, code for RSS feeds, etc.
- We had two training sessions to bring everyone up to speed on how to blog.