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Daniel Rubin



Reporter at the Philadelphia Inquirer since 1988, except from 2000 to 2003, when I was Knight Ridder's European

correspondent, based in Berlin.
Latest job: covering the business of entertainment.
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Email

It was a wise man who said news is a conversation. Let's talk. Please comment on what moves you. If you email me, I might want to quote from it. Unless you tell me it's private. I honor confidences.

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January 17, 2006

Happy Birthday, Blog Daddy



Happy birthday to Ben Franklin, the nation's first blogger.

Not so far a stretch, really. He pamphleteered, self-published, delivered colonial dish, news and opinion, sampled other's work and remixed it into his own mash.

He wrote anonymously, or under pseudonyms. Instead of posting daily, he squirreled away his words and published them in an almanac.

Doesn't this sound familiar?

In 1732 I first published my Almanack, under the name of Richard Saunders; it was continued by me about twenty-five years, commonly called "Poor Richard's Almanac." I

January 2006

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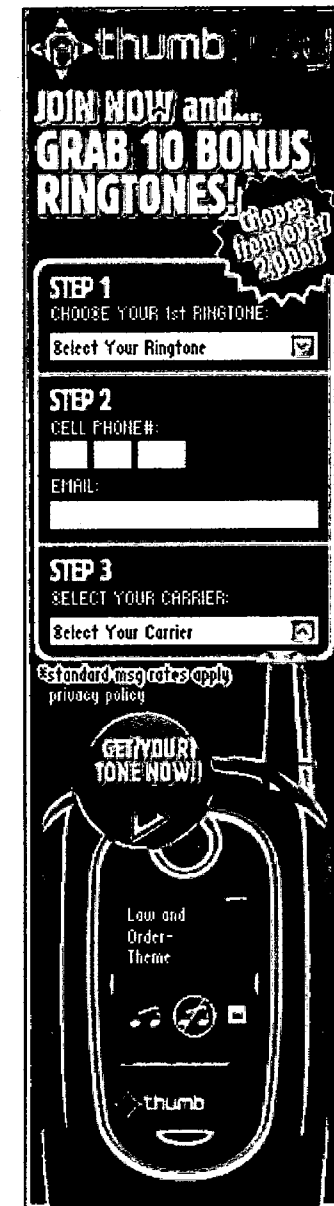
endeavored to make it both entertaining and useful, and it accordingly came to be in such demand that I reaped considerable profit from it, vending annually near ten thousand. And observing that it was generally read, scarce any neighborhood in the province being without it, I considered it as a proper vehicle for conveying instruction among the common people, who brought scarcely any other books. I therefore filled all the little spaces that occurred between the remarkable days in the calendar with proverbial sentences, chiefly such as inculcated industry and frugality as the means of procuring wealth and thereby securing virtue; it being more difficult for a man in want to act always honestly as, to use here one of those proverbs, it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright.

All except for the profitable part.

Ok, this is not an original idea. Josh Peterson, co-founder of the company that created the 43 Things site, has podcast about Ben, the blogger. He sees modern-day Franklins in Lawrence Lessig and Robert Scoble.

Peterson wrote Blinq by email:

Franklin was the consummate amateur - someone who pursues their interests out of a love for the thing, not as a recognized expert - and that sort of amateurism gave us the lending library, the volunteer fire department, swim fins, and most of Franklin's accomplishments in diplomacy and science. Today, the web provides the premiere opportunity to practice this sort of amateurism. What starts as a google search and ends in a blog post opens the doors to amateur journalism. A way to trade Pez dispensers with others passionate about collectables turns into eBay, a mailing list for friends can turn into Craigslist, and a democratic idea like using "who links to whom" as a way for ranking results in a search engine provides the idea that makes Google great.



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 Boing Boing: A Directory of Wonderful
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 The Rubins
 Happy Birthday, Blog Daddy

Dave McNamee has blogged about blogger Ben:

The arguments that he crafted in his written works helped him accomplish great things throughout his life. I think blogging can do the same thing for a person if they put some thought into it.

Blog seer Doc Searls has said it. So has legal blogger, J. Craig Williams, who opined, and somewhat debatedly: *all bloggers are journalists. All we have to do is rely on precedent. You know - go back in time at bit. Thanks, Ben Franklin, for the reminder that one person can be writer, printer and publisher all rolled into one.*

Finally, read Rex Hammock: *Someone, and I can promise it won't be me, should adapt the works of Franklin into a blog format. If ever there was a blogger ahead of his time, it was Benjamin Franklin. He even wrote under multiple pseudonyms so that he could debate himself (and, as some of the personas were female, herself).*

Now there's a profitable idea.

Posted by Daniel Rubin at 12:00 AM in Weblogs
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 Blinq observes the birthday of Ben Franklin, noting some similarities between Ben and modern day bloggers. Given

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a contraction of blog and inquirer. Fast, but not ephemeral. And it's part of the newspaper, the filtered, mainstream aggregator that pays me:

The Point

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Philly's rich offerings to the blogosphere, I guess it makes sense. [\[Read More\]](#)

Tracked on Jan 17, 2006 2:01:07 AM

Comments

It doesn't matter who you are or what you do - if you live in this city, Ben Franklin had an impact on you.

Posted by: Wade Bigsog | Jan 17, 2006 1:41:37 AM

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