

The Concept of Computerization Movements as an Explanation of the Rise and Spread of Blogging

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Among various information and communication technologies (ICTs) characteristic of the last decade, blogging definitely takes its place. A nameless and barely noticed hobby for active Internet users of the early 90s, blogging has been picked up by the wider audience and finally drew attention of the mainstream media in the 2000s and spread over various spheres such as business, politics, and education.

A weblog (or blog) is usually characterized as a web page made up of relatively short, frequently updated posts that are arranged chronologically (usually in reverse chronological order). Blogs typically have a title and some details about the author such as name or a link to the profile; each post has a date, a title, a permalink (a permanent URL for the post), and sometimes a link to comments left by the readers. This relatively stable and unified format makes blogs quite easy to recognize. Blogs' heterogeneous and unpredictable content, however, makes them difficult to describe and conceptualize.

Most of the current literature on blogs employs an intuitive "format-based" definition of blogs when it discusses the rise and spread of blogging and its impact on larger societal issues such as citizenship, democracy, the role of mass media and journalism, etc. These discussions are largely based on the assumption that ICTs inevitably affect social processes in either positive or negative ways. Multiple examples of how blogs do this (see, for example, Taylor, 2004), however, are not supported by a theoretical framework that will justify this assumption as well as help to explain why blogging is being adopted and considered to promote positive change. This paper employs the framework of computerization movements (CMs) developed by Iacono and Kling (1994, 1996, 2001) to

examine blogging and its adoption from the socio-technical perspective in attempt to answer the following questions:

- Can blogging be characterized as a computerization movement (CM)?
- What can be gained from characterizing blogging as a CM? Can the concept of CM provide insights into the wider adoption of blogging?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the CMs framework as a theoretical framework for analyzing adoption of new technologies beyond institutional settings?

The paper briefly discusses the issue of computerization in the US. Then it elaborates on the concept of computerization movements and their main components and applies this concept to blogging. Finally, it discusses the applicability of the concept of CMs to blogging and its usefulness in research and practice.

References

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