

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Successfully Using Web 2.0 Technologies in Forest History

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If you haven't already checked it out, you should. By that I mean the Forest History Society's triple-award-winning blog, *Peeling Back the Bark*. A couple of times a month we upload posts about new collections in the archives, new online historical photographs, and current events with interesting historical context. Among the 112 million (as of 2008) blogs now on the Internet, this is a unique, new, and nonintrusive way to get your fix of forest history each month.

The source of the awards is also interesting. They come from three very different organizations representing three different fields. The first award, from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), recognized *Peeling Back the Bark* with its Special Merit Award for blogs by universities and other educational institutions. We were the only nonuniversity to win an award in this category. Archives Next, which identifies innovative uses of web technology in archives and related fields, gave the FHS blog its Best Institutional Blog Award. Lastly, the Gold Circle Award from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) recognized our innovative ideas and achievement in association communications.

To visit the blog, you can go to www.PeelingBackTheBark.org or to the FHS website at www.ForestHistory.org and click on the green "Blog" button. You can then sign up to receive an email notice or an RSS feed alert when a new blog entry is posted. The blog is receiving more than 2,500 visits monthly. The most viewed posts include ones about wood forensics and the Lindbergh kidnapping, forest fire in Australia (by guest blogger Stephen Pyne), river log drives, the International Order of Hoo Hoo, and the spotted owl. When you visit, please feel free to leave a comment about any of the posts.

The Society has also established a YouTube channel, a Flickr site, a Twitter feed, and a Wikipedia presence. The FHS YouTube channel hosts historical film footage from the Society's archives, including Smokey Bear public service announcements, smokejumpers in action, and logging of Louisiana cypress. The Flickr site hosts some of our historic photograph collection and sends users directly to the full online photographic database. From the FHS Twitter account, we send one or two "tweets" each week to highlight online digital content in forest history. These can be "retweeted" to the Society's great advantage. For example, @archivesnext, an archives-related blogger, retweeted to her 641 followers one of our tweets that linked to a *Peeling Back the Bark* blog post.

These Web 2.0 tools are highly interactive. For example, the Forest Tech Blog (forest-tech.blogspot.com) used a photo from our Flickr site for its blog post announcing the opening of the



hunting season in Pennsylvania. We had recently posted a tweet about this and other new photographs as part of a new photo album on outdoor recreation.

The tools drive additional traffic to our main website, thereby increasing our visibility and the eventual use of forest history information from our archives and library and elsewhere. Evidence so far shows that it is working. In September 2009, more than 900 unique visitors to the FHS web pages came directly from these referring sites.

Numbers of site visits and increased visibility are certainly valid measures of success. But the most important measures will remain increased use of the Society's primary materials and increased support for core programs. We'll keep you informed of our progress. In the meantime, we are encouraged. Read this post from the Public Humanities Toolbox:

Check out the [blog] site for the Forest History Society. This organization is really on board with the various social media tools profiled in the Public Humanities Toolbox. Their most recent post embodies the interactive, playful, and practical uses of such tools for small organizations, too. They've designed several print ads promoting the Society's social media tools, posted all of the ads on their blog, and are allowing visitors to choose which ad should eventually be published. As you'll note, the organization is not without a sense of humor about itself!

And below is one of the ads referred to in the post. You can find the location of all the Web 2.0 tools in it. The winning ad is on page 30.

Hungry for more forest history?



YouTube
youtube.com/ForestHistory

twitter
twitter.com/ForestHistory

flickr
flickr.com/ForestHistory

blog
PeelingBacktheBark.org

Get a big helping of history with our Social Media tools. We've made it easy to fill up with our archival films on YouTube, featured photos on Flickr, updates at Twitter, and conversation at *Peeling Back the Bark*. At FHS, there's more than one way to satisfy that hunger for history!

FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY  www.ForestHistory.org  919.682.9319