



Information Research – Vol. 31 No. iConf (2026)

Ensuring the long-term accessibility of scholarly blogs: Bloggers' attitudes and practices

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47989/ir31iConf64176>

Abstract

Introduction. This study explores the integration of scholarly blogs into digital research and information infrastructures, focusing on the attitudes and practices of German scholarly bloggers regarding the long-term accessibility of their blogs.

Method and Analysis. We conducted 13 semi-structured interviews with scholarly bloggers. The interview transcripts were coded in MAXQDA 24 using a qualitative thematic approach.

Results. Findings reveal that participants recognise the importance of making their blogs long-term accessible and express a desire for their integration into existing digital infrastructures. However, they also face organisational challenges and varying levels of engagement in preservation practices, ranging from obtaining formal identifiers like ISSNs and DOIs to relying on individual strategies such as local backups.

Conclusions. This study emphasizes the need for clearer guidelines and support systems to facilitate the long-term accessibility of scholarly blogs. While bloggers generally recognise the importance of long-term accessibility, digital research and information infrastructures do not yet sufficiently offer solutions for bloggers.

Introduction

This study is concerned with scholarly blogs – blogs that are either written by scholars or concerned with scholarly topics (Puschmann, 2012) – and their integration into digital research and information infrastructures that we define as shared sociotechnical and organisational systems that collectively enable the conduct of research (Bowker et al., 2010). While traditional forms of scholarly output (e.g. journal articles, conference proceedings or books) are integrated into digital research and information infrastructures, there are no equivalent structures that ensure a comprehensive preservation of scholarly blogs (Burton, 2015; Hank, 2011; Kasioumis et al., 2014). Therefore the long-term accessibility of scholarly blogs is not yet ensured (Ochsner et al., 2025c). Preserving blogs is important regarding growing commitments to Open Science and good scientific practice (ALLEA, 2023) but also urgent since many scholarly blogs are already not accessible anymore (Ochsner et al., 2025b). The term digital preservation means the assurance and long-term access to digitally stored information (Lee et al., 2002). In addition to blog preservation, scholarly blogs also need to be citable in the long term, otherwise the visibility of blog content is minimised. Citability can be enhanced by Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs). DOIs are Persistent Identifiers (PIDs) for scholarly content that ensure the permanent accessibility of blog posts and enable the aggregation of blog posts by search engines and databases, thus enhancing their discoverability (Ochsner et al., 2025b).

Within the research on scholarly blogs, their permanent accessibility and the ensuing infrastructural aspects have been little addressed (Hank, 2011). Discussions about blogs' long-term accessibility have mostly been taking place among bloggers themselves (Fenner, 2022; Hank, 2011) or initiatives aimed at building infrastructures to preserve blogs (Fenner, 2022; Guilleux, 2024; Kalb et al., 2013; Lazaridou et al., 2013), like the *BlogForever* project, that examined web archiving options for scholarly blogs (Kalb et al., 2013). The blog repository created during the *BlogForever* project, however is no longer accessible (Pampel and Rothfritz, 2024). Another effort to preserve blogs is made through Rogue Scholar, a digital blog archive that uses blog feeds to retrieve blog posts and their metadata (Fenner 2022; 2023).

This study builds on a quantitative analysis of how 866 German scholarly blogs are integrated into digital information infrastructures to ensure their long-term accessibility (Ochsner et al., 2025b). While this analysis captures the extent and kinds of technical integration, this study focuses on social and organisational systems and factors that affect and contextualise the technical integration of scholarly blogs into digital information infrastructures. To address this, the present study employs a qualitative approach to analyse the practices and underlying motivations that shape processes of integration or non-integration.

We pursue the following research questions:

1. What are bloggers' attitudes towards making their blogs long-term accessible?
2. What efforts have scholarly bloggers made to integrate their blogs into digital information infrastructures?

This study contributes to scholarship on scholarly communication and scholarly blogs by offering insights on bloggers' attitudes and practices concerning the preservation of their blogs. Following this introduction, this study proceeds with an outline of the background, followed by a description of the methods used. We then present the findings according to research questions, and afterwards discuss the findings and their implications. We conclude with a summary of the study.

Background

Unlike traditional research outputs, scholarly blogs are an inexpensive, quick, open and more casual means of sharing research for both bloggers and readers. Blogs serve as an alternative venue

for academic discourse (Hank, 2011) and facilitate both internal scholarly communication within academic communities and external communication of science to the general public (Wenninger, 2019).

While blogs contribute to an open scholarly communication, they often do not meet formal requirements for Diamond open access journals (Dalkilic, 2025), since compared to traditional publications, most scholarly blogs do not undergo peer review and editing before publication (Burton, 2015). As a result, scholarly blogs' level of recognition as academic output continues to vary (Puschmann, 2012), while blogs are also usually overlooked when assessing research performance.

Scholarly blogs can be hosted by bloggers themselves or institutional websites, but are most often hosted by scholarly blogging platforms or WordPress.com (Ochsner et al., 2025b). Commonly used scholarly blogging platforms in Germany are de.hypotheses, a blogging platform for the humanities and social sciences, ScienceBlogs, and Scilogs (Ochsner et al., 2025b).

Even though there is no distinct infrastructure that preserves blogs yet, a quantitative analysis of 866 scholarly blogs uncovered different measures that help make blogs more accessible and reusable. Bloggers have already been found to register PIDs such as International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSNs) for their blogs or DOIs for blog posts. Since the German National Library (DNB) distributes ISSNs in Germany (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, n.d.), blogs with an ISSN usually have an entry in the library catalogue of the DNB. The quantitative analysis furthermore revealed that of 866 scholarly blogs, about one third of had registered an ISSN and had an entry in the DNB. About half of the blogs provided DOIs and citation proposals for their blog posts. However, all the blogs that did so used the blogging platform de.hypotheses and received their DOI through the platform. Apart from de.hypotheses, blogs can register DOIs through some academic libraries and the blog archive Rogue Scholar. 217 (25.04%) blogs analysed in the quantitative analysis provided licensing information and 840 (97%) had a blog feed that was accessible either directly on the blog or through a feed reader (Ochsner et al., 2025b).

Method

Participants

Building on our analysis of 866 German scholarly blogs (Ochsner et al., 2025a), we invited scholarly bloggers via email to participate in our interview study. As seen in figure 1, the sample of 866 German scholarly blogs consisted of 671 (77.48%) blogs from the humanities and social sciences, 40 (4.62%) blogs from the natural sciences, 26 (3%) blogs from the engineering sciences, 38 (3.39%) from the life sciences and 91 (10.51%) interdisciplinary blogs.

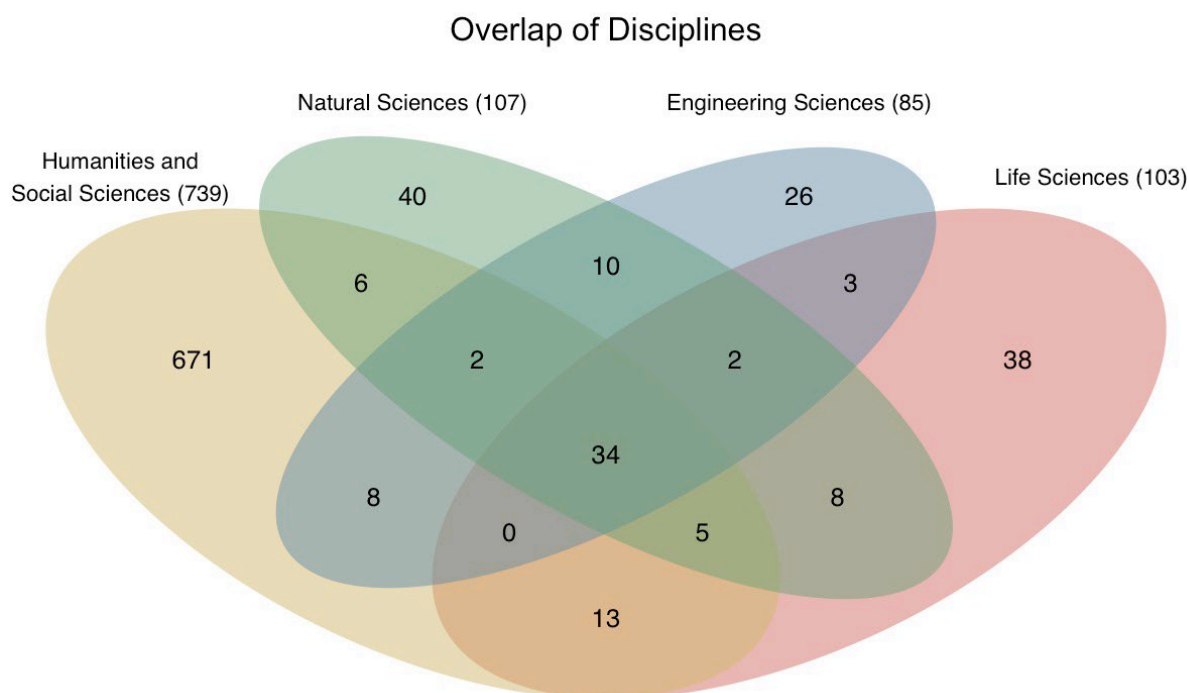


Figure 1. Overlap of disciplines.

Furthermore, 472 (54.5%) blogs were hosted on the blogging platform de.hypotheses, 91 (10.51%) blogs were hosted by ScienceBlogs, 36 (4.16%) blogs were hosted by SciLogs, and 87 (10.05%) blogs by various other platforms. Additionally, 555 (64.09%) blogs in the sample stated to have an institutional affiliation, while 291 (33.60%) blogs did not, while 20 (2.31%) blogs did not provide information on authors or institutions (Ochsner et al., 2025b). We sought to represent this sample of German scholarly blogs and aimed to ensure diversity among participants in terms of gender, discipline, institutional affiliation, and blogging platform. To preserve confidentiality, we do not report demographic variables at the participant level. Participants received detailed information about the study and their rights and provided their informed consent prior to conducting the interviews. Participants will be referred to as P1 to P13.

Data collection

This study utilises semi-structured interviews with 13 German scholarly bloggers. An interview guide was developed prior to the interviews to provide structure while allowing flexibility in question phrasing and order. The guide commenced with broad questions and conversation starters, gradually transitioning to more specific and potentially closed questions that focused on relevant aspects of the discussion. Although the questions were pre-formulated, they were adapted to fit the context of each interview and the individual participant (Werner, 2013). Two pre-tests conducted in January 2025 highlighted the need for greater specificity, leading to a subsequent revision of the guide. The interviews were conducted in German between January and March 2025, mostly via Zoom (one via BigBlueButton) and lasted 35–51 minutes. The audio of the interview was recorded with the participants consent. The interviews were transcribed using Amberscript and checked manually for accuracy. All transcripts were anonymised and stored both locally and on cloud services compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Data analysis

Transcripts were coded in MAXQDA 24 following qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2024). A coding frame combining deductive codes (derived from the interview guide) and inductive

codes (emerging from data) was developed. Codes were structured hierarchically, and all quotations were translated into English by the authors. Data coding commenced during the collection process and continued post-interviews.

Findings

Attitudes

Most participants emphasised the importance of ensuring the long-term accessibility of scholarly blogs. As one blogger remarked: *'Blogs are ultimately cultural heritage, literature in the sense of contemporary texts. And that alone speaks in favour of some form of archiving'* (P5, pos. 52). Another participant stressed the necessity of stability and citability:

For us as editors of a blog, it has always been crucial that things are reliably long-term available, that URLs are stable and long-term available, and that things can be cited, especially when they are cited in print formats. If you cite a link that can no longer be found a year later, the whole thing makes no sense. (P2, pos. 46)

At the same time, bloggers were aware that such preservation efforts involve organisational challenges:

So, in my opinion, it's clear that the German science blogosphere should be archived, that consideration should be given to how to preserve it, how to make it available and how to make this available content interesting in some way. (P5, pos. 73)

Although some participants had not previously considered the long-term accessibility of their blogs, they nonetheless recognised its potential importance. One blogger admitted: *'I haven't thought about it yet, but it would definitely be an idea if it didn't actually put me at a disadvantage in terms of legal aspects and so on'* (P11, pos. 37). When asked about whether they already applied practices that help make their blog posts long-term available, P11 said:

Well, it hasn't really been an issue so far, because we haven't really seen it as a kind of scientific publication, which is common practice. Just as it isn't the case with social media. I think we really need to think about it. The nice thing is that you can also just delete a blog post. (P11, pos. 41)

Nevertheless, P11 acknowledged that long-term accessibility could be relevant in certain contexts: *'But I can imagine that when it comes to scholarly communication in the context of projects, it would of course be relevant to document this somewhere beyond your own website'* (P11, pos. 41). Even though blogs differ from traditional academic publications, other participants still emphasised the importance of blog preservation.

Because even though this format is fast and thrives on that, and that's one of the features that sets it apart from traditional publications in a positive way, it is still a knowledge base that scientists and those working in science can and should use to build on. (P4, pos. 46)

Some participants expressed the importance of being able to control if they want their blogs to be long-term accessible and what contents they want to preserve *'If you could control that individually, that wouldn't be bad, or at least let the bloggers decide'* (P11, pos. 41). This especially concerned content that might not be up-to-date with current research: *'I don't want there to be anything in there that simply no longer corresponds to the current status [of research]'* (P6, pos. 60).

In conclusion, while most bloggers agreed that the accessibility of their blogs is an important issue, some emphasised their desire to retain control over what is preserved. The two participants that expressed concern over long term accessibility (P6 and P11) blogged about life and engineering sciences. No participants from the humanities and social sciences expressed concerns or disinterest in the long term accessibility of blogs.

Existing practices

Many participants reported having an ISSN registered for their blog and viewed ISSNs to be an important contribution to their blogs. One participant stated about requiring an ISSN through the blogging platform de.hypotheses *'...and it is not a problem at all to get one. So I also always told other colleagues, 'Please do that!'. You write them and within a few days you get sent something'* (P9, pos. 43-44). A few participants reported on providing a DOI for each blog post. One participant stated: *'...my main concern was that the texts were secured and accessible with a DOI'* (P13, pos. 41). DOIs were typically obtained either through de.hypotheses or via academic libraries. Some participants stated to have entries for their blogs in the DNB or an academic library. A number of participants reformat posts into different output formats (PDF, DOCX) and make these available on their blog or through libraries.

Other participants described individual practices, such as creating local backups (P8), relying on external services like the Internet Archive (P2), distributing content via newsletters (P9) or reusing blog content in other publication formats, such as monographs (P6) or presentations (P6). One participant stated that the provision of a Creative Commons Attribution licence (CC-BY) allowed for the reuse of their blog. *'...and since we provide a CC-BY licence, I expect that it is being used for text and data mining'* (P1, pos. 41).

In summary, many participants already take on measures that make their blogs citable and discoverable. The most common measures consist of ISSNs, DOIs and library entries. Some participants (P6, P8, P9) relied on ad hoc or personal measures to reuse and save their blog contents.

Discussion

Attitudes – The findings show a strong recognition among participants concerning the importance of long-term accessibility for scholarly blogs, reflecting an awareness of blogs as a form of cultural and scientific heritage. Participants emphasised that the preservation of blogs is not only a matter of archiving content, but also of ensuring the integrity and citability of scholarly communication. The attitudes expressed by participants reveal ambivalence among some bloggers regarding long-term accessibility. While participants acknowledged potential value, some are cautious about practical and legal implications, as well as about the potential loss of control over content. This shows a tension between the fluid, dynamic nature of blogs and the archival expectations of traditional scholarly practices. Participants' desire to control which content is preserved underscores the need for preservation strategies that are participatory. While participants from the humanities and social sciences were already convinced that their blogs need to be long term accessible, only half of the bloggers from engineering, life, and natural sciences agreed. The findings indicate that the preservation of scholarly blogs is not merely a technical but also a social issue and cultural imperative that requires a shift in how scholarly blogs are perceived within the academic community.

Existing practices – The study also reports on a range of existing practices aimed at enhancing long-term accessibility. Participants reported the use of formal identifiers such as ISSNs and DOIs, licensing practices (e.g., CC-BY), and collaboration with libraries. These practices reflect patterns already identified in our quantitative analysis of scholarly blogs and mirror strategies traditionally associated with formal scholarly publishing. In contrast, practices such as regular archiving with the Internet Archive, creation of local backups, or distribution via newsletters were not captured

in the quantitative study, representing an extension of the previous dataset. Additional measures also included producing alternative output formats (e.g., PDF, DOCX) and reusing blog content in traditional scholarly outputs, such as monographs or presentations. Notably, none of the bloggers mentioned blog feeds. This absence does not necessarily imply that feeds are not provided, but rather that bloggers may not associate them with preservation practices. While some blogs were well integrated into formal infrastructures, others relied primarily on individual strategies, and a few reported taking no active measures to secure their content. Overall, the findings confirm the diversity of efforts and levels of engagement already revealed in our quantitative analysis (Ochsner et al., 2025b). At the same time, the lack of common practices points to the need for more comprehensive solutions and stronger support systems that encourage scholarly bloggers to adopt and make effective use of existing resources and preservation practices.

Collectively, these findings underscore the evolving nature of scholarly blogs as a medium: while they share characteristics with traditional publications, they also retain distinctive qualities, such as immediacy, fluidity, and multimedia integration. Any archiving or preservation strategy must therefore account for these unique features, ensuring that both the content and the contextual experience of the blog are preserved.

Limitations and future research

As the data are qualitative, the findings cannot be generalised to broader populations. Due to the specific focus on long-term accessibility, many participants who chose to respond appeared to have a pre-existing interest in the topic, which may have limited the diversity of perspectives represented. Because the study is restricted to German blogs, it may not capture the full range of practices and challenges present in other national contexts. Interviews with international bloggers could reveal different approaches to ensuring the long-term accessibility of scholarly blogs. Finally, since this study concentrated on existing practices, motivations, and attitudes toward long-term accessibility, future research could explore bloggers' concrete requirements for infrastructures designed to support the preservation of scholarly blogs.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the interest among scholarly bloggers in ensuring the long-term accessibility of blogs and their integration into digital research and information infrastructures. Participants recognised the cultural and scholarly significance of their blogs, viewing them as valuable contributions to academic discourse. Participants also acknowledged the organisational challenges associated with archiving and preserving blog content. The findings reveal a diverse range of practices among bloggers, from formal measures like obtaining ISSNs and DOIs to more informal strategies such as local backups and content distribution via newsletters and books. While institutional tools such as PIDs and entries in library catalogues provide formal mechanisms for ensuring accessibility, the complementary use with self-directed strategies, reflect both practical constraints and a desire for control over content. While some bloggers actively engage in practices that promote long-term preservation, others remain less proactive, indicating a need for clearer guidelines and support systems. Overall, this study underscores the importance of integrating blogs into the broader academic landscape. This is particularly important as open publications gain increasing significance in the ongoing transformation toward Open Science. To ensure the integrity of the scientific record, research in information science, in close dialogue with the library community, should actively shape this field.

Acknowledgements

The work of Catharina Ochsner and is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (project number: 528958385). Heinz Pampel's work is supported by the Einstein Center Digital Future (ECDF).

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