

What's a Blog got to do with it?

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Why is it that so few Irish arts organisations and artists currently recognise the centrality of an online presence as part of their development strategy?

There are [71 million blogs](#) and a new Blog is created every half second. [499,760](#) of those blogs (at the time of writing) mention or refer to poetry. All over cyberspace poets and poetry lovers are engaged in passionate conversations about the work. Why is it that so few Irish arts organisations and artists currently recognise the centrality of an online presence as part of their development strategy?

If you are an artist, then you want an audience. If you are an artist working in a niche art form area then that audience may be small and diminishing. No amount of investment in marketing strategies, audience development, outreach and education initiatives will impact on the size of that audience in the short term. How do you start conversations about your art form? How do you get critical feedback about what works and what doesn't? How do you talk to your peers? Meet new ones? Make a living?

You give your work away. Yes.....you heard me correctly...[Blogs](#) and other social media platforms such as [Wikis](#) and [Podcasting](#) are essential tools for artists wishing to connect with an audience. Blogs are curated and conversational spaces designed to share ideas, expertise, creativity and opinion with a community of interest. Blogs are based on giving stuff away. If you can't bear the idea of sharing your ideas then blogging isn't for you. However if you imagine for a moment that the audience and community for poetry is global and not geographically bound by the rim of this is-

land then blogging starts to make complete sense as a way of developing the conversation. Online life is full of great writers, fabulous opinions and now, a mechanism for publishing. Blogging puts you in a conversation with people who (a) have something to say and (b) care about what you have to say. It's a totally different relationship with peers and audience than can be created in any other static medium.

Blogging, like all conversations, requires commitment. You need to show up, you need to participate and critically you need to have something to say. Publishing your thoughts and ideas is one side of the conversation – making space (through a comments thread and commenting on other people's blogs) is the other. The technology provides simple ways (through [RSS](#), [Tagging](#) and [Aggregators](#)) for you to be found and to find others with whom you want to converse. Of course there are questions and issues – copyright, freedom of speech; time spent reading and commenting; technical stuff about how to get online/maintain a Blog and not to mention the dreaded "Blogger's block".

In a media savvy society – shouldn't you be aware of what people are saying about you? Shouldn't you contribute to or start that discussion? Here are 10 ideas to get you started.

1. Release podcasts presentations of [poets reading and presenting their work](#)
2. Release the soundtrack for a show as a download (as the [Merce Cunningham Dance Company did in 2006](#))
3. Start a discussion about [contemporary art](#) in advance of exhibitions as a gateway for newcomers to the art form
4. Create [podcasts by experts](#) to assist audiences engage with your work
5. Let a [picture](#) do the talking
6. [Allow audiences into the art making process](#) with regular posts about the rehearsal process from the perspective of various members of the company e.g. designer and choreographer etc. [Record conversations, make transcripts available](#)—trust that this will increase curiosity about your work.
7. [Publish your work online](#) and get feedback as the process progresses
8. Create word of mouth on a performance by asking readers the only marketing question that matters "[would you recommend this to a friend?](#)"
9. Use the virtual space as a [gallery or curatorial space](#) and [commissioning/presentation](#) arena for artists of all disciplines and practice areas
10. [Ask readers how they want to engage with your work](#) – online discussions with artists? Advance notice of booking options? Use the medium as an idea generation space.

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