

REAL COLLECTION, VIRTUAL CONNECTION

Blogging about resources for people with dementia, their carers and professionals working with people with dementia is a far cry from fashion, crafts and other 'fun' topics. Yet it is a salient demonstration of the success of merging an existing collection, in-depth information professional knowledge and readily-accessible technology, as Natasha Bradley has found.

The Alzheimer's Australia VIC Library blog, Dementia Resources (dementiareources.org.au), was first published just over a year ago. From inception with a following of two people we have now flourished to a readership of 309, and traffic of more than 700 monthly page views.

Our library has a collection of some 3,000 resources. For patrons who can visit our physical space, we can offer abundant support and materials. However, many people caring for and/or working with people with dementia do not have the time to visit us and make use of our expertise and resources.

In establishing our blog, we sought to extend our reach beyond the physical limitations of our location and to



The Dementia Resources blog covers a diverse range of topics about dementia, including its effect on indigenous populations in Australia.

connect with a wider audience. We believe that the blog has enhanced and extended our library's services.

Establishing the blog was straightforward, and we recommend anyone starting out on a similar project takes advantage of the time and effort major platform providers such as Wordpress have put into their tools. As long as your organisation's policy allows this, it's a cost-effective and simple means of getting started.

We found it was important to think of the blog as an addition to our library's communication channels, and to remember that, while good content and simple structure and formatting of the webpage matter, allowing the presentation style and 'voice' to evolve over a period of time is also quite acceptable.

Using a human 'voice' for this content and being specific with blog topics has been important. It's tempting to adopt a more formal tone of voice on a public forum, however this can be very off-putting on an asynchronous platform such as a blog. We found it was more effective to be engaging and use plain English when posting. Honing blog posts to be subject-specific ('dementia in prison populations' for example) enables blog users to quickly select topics of interest and collects all relevant materials on a topic into a virtual subject guide.

Like a garden, a blog needs regular tending, so we need to make time for regular posts.

We aim to post once every two to three weeks and have developed an editorial schedule which we also align with organisational events such as Dementia Awareness Month.

One of the real strengths of blogging is the agility it can bring to your public presence. If something unexpected is happening in your community, the blog allows you to rapidly respond by getting useful information out there in a very timely fashion.

You can share (almost) anything. As well as resources available through our library, we ensure that many of our suggested materials are readily available online such as videos, free downloads of reports and guides or useful websites.

It is not unusual for someone to wander into our library to request a resource we have posted on our blog or to contact us via email wanting access to a book, article or DVD. The Dementia Resources blog has undoubtedly extended our reach and increased the frequency of communication with our members. Blog on!

NATASHA BRADLEY
Library & Information Officer
Alzheimer's Australia VIC Library
natasha.bradley@alzheimers.org.au